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LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

CALEB STRONG, ESQ.

LATE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS:

SHOWING

WAR TO BE INCONSISTENT WITH THE LAWS OF CHRIST, AND

THE GOOD OF MANKIND.

Samuel May

SECOND EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1817.

DEDICATION.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY,

DE WITT CLINTON, L. L. D.

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND PRESIDENT OF THE
LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK,

AND TO THE MEMBERS OF THAT SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

SUFFER me, by inscribing these Letters to you, to express my sense of the debt of gratitude due, from every member of society, to the patrons and most active promoters of science and literature. Should this or any other expressions of respect not countervail the hazard of appearing before you, in the support of opinions both singular and unpopular, I must, notwithstanding hope that, upon mature reflection, those opinions will not be thought wholly without foundation. It has happened in religion, as in natural philosophy and in politics—The true system of the universe was known to the ancient philosophers of Greece, but having been opposed, and laid aside, by men of less research and reflection, it was lost to the world, till revived by Copernicus. So also were the principles of civil liberty known, to some of the ancient nations, but were abandoned and forgotten for many ages, till they were, with arts and literature, recovered from the ruins of antiquity, restored to light, and reduced to practice.

The question has been agitated of late, whether Christians have a right to engage in war. The illustrious Erasmus, as early as the days of the reformation, in his celebrated "Complaint of Peace," called the attention of Europe to this subject. It seems, however, not to have made much progress among the German reformers; but in England a Society, founded by George Fox and others, dared to stem the torrent of popular opinion. They wholly disclaimed war, together with capital punishments, as inconsistent with the laws of Christ; and accordingly assumed the noble appellation of Friends, a name truly appropriate to their distinguishing tenet; but by the folly and malice of the times they

were called *Quakers*. In this country, the attention of many persons has been recently called to this important question. A careful examination of the precepts of the Gospel, and of the principles and practice of the apostolic Church, has resulted in a full and unwavering conviction in many minds, that war is incompatible with the duty and obligations of Christians.

The consequences to be expected from the pacific principles of the primitive Christians, fully appears in the history of the Church during its first period. They abstained from war; they made no resistance; they offered no violence. Under this passive and inoffensive character Christianity rapidly overspread the Roman empire; and it was acknowledged by a Roman emperor, when he wielded the military force of forty legions, that, should the Christians resort to arms, their numbers were sufficient to overturn his empire. Yet, in the reign of Dioclesian, in a general persecution of ten years, myriads of Christians were put to death, without offering resistance or resorting to means of defence.

But Christianity still gaining ground upon heathenism, and uniting wealth, numbers, and influence, at length ascended the throne of the Cæsars, and the empire became professedly Christian. If in the purest state of the Church, when under disgrace and persecution, many false professors were found, it may be presumed that, as she rose to power and splendour, and began to offer allurements to ambition, and changed her robes of humility for the imperial purple, her ranks were crowded by men, who preferred to bear the sword of violence, rather than the cross of Christ, and who were more ready to pursue false honour, through blood and slaughter, than to lay down their lives as martyrs for their religion, in expectation of an immortal crown in heaven.

The change of the Christian Church from peace and non-resistance, to retaliation, war, and conquest, was gradual; nor was it effected by her sufferings, but by her prosperity. And who has not observed the fatal consequences often arising from the intoxications of that Circean cup? If adversity is justly styled the school of wisdom, prosperity is like the harlot's lap, on which the mighty Hebrew slumbered, and was shorn of his strength.

Christians, though not lovers of adversity, cannot but perceive under what circumstances their religion rose and prevailed; and if they examine with candour, they will also perceive, that, in the deplorable apostacy of the Church, her abandonment of her meek

and humble character, and resorting to war and bloodshed, operated as both cause and effect. Whether she can return to her primitive ground, whether she can re-assume the white robes of innocence, meekness, and peace, which at first covered her with glory and beauty, without again tasting the bitter cup of affliction and persecution, remains to be determined by experiment.

Many persons in various parts of the United States, have lately, as by a simultaneous influence, adopted the pacific system, under circumstances which seem to indicate general and pre-disposing causes; as when you see flowers in one place, you may expect to find them in another, because they indicate the arrival of the vernal season. The state of the political world is such as might, perhaps, be expected to produce a tendency to pacific principles. The demonstration of the folly of ambition cannot well be carried higher, the mischief and misery attending the spirit of war, can hardly be more fully displayed, or severely felt, or the blessings of peace be rendered more acceptable and grateful to nations. Nor is the state of the moral world less conducive to that grand result. The progress of knowledge, civilization, and refinement, has dissipated errors, coeval with nations. The chains of slavery are broken, and liberty of conscience, the restraint of which is the basest slavery, now prevails. Reason and philanthropy have even softened the savage features of war, and have rendered the ambition of conquerors odious. And in the religious world, general expectation, founded on sacred prediction, and justified by events of an unequivocal nature, is ready to seize on every indication of an approaching period of peace, prosperity, and glory to the church of Christ.

Gentlemen, the province of Philosophy is conterminous to that of Religion; and she is next in excellence and loveliness to that immortal offspring of Divinity. Knowledge is her treasure, and the acquisition of it, her employment. She enlightens, liberalizes and ennobles the mind: and she inquires after truth, not to establish thrones, not to influence in the disposition of crowns or mitres, not to prop and sustain false and hollow systems, which ignorance reared, and ambition maintains. She disseminates truth by the aid of reason to make men happy, and not by the sword to make them slaves. She rejects nothing because it is old, or because it is new—because it is popular, or because it is singular. At an equal remove from prejudice and pride, her

worst enemy is ignorance, and her grand object is to discover truth, because it is preferable to error.

The subject of these Letters lies not, indeed, in the usual range of philosophical research; yet the philosopher looks through the telescope as well as the microscope, contemplates mind as well as matter, ponders the future as well as the past, and from physical causes and effects, often makes a transition to the moral order and influence of events.

Philosophy is not more remote from religion than the understanding is from the heart, or than knowledge is from virtue. They have equal claims to antiquity; can both complain, with equal justice, of having been corrupted, abused, and traduced; and both have shared a similar fortune in the revolutions of empire and opinion, under the reign of passion, prejudice, and folly. They have revived together, the one assuming as her province the natural, the other the moral world.

With these views, Gentlemen, of the sphere of your profession, I cheerfully commit these Letters to your notice and patronage. None can be more sensible than you, of the outrage and devastation war has committed on the republic of letters, and how it has in all ages, shut and sealed up many of the fairest fountains of natural knowledge; so that the philosopher cannot travel far, but he is checked in his progress by the point of the sword, or by resentments which remain when war has subsided. And what is still worse, nations are so impoverished and beggared by war, that they have neither the leisure, nor the means of promoting literature and the arts, did they retain the disposition to do so.

But, should you, after all, conclude that war, though a great calamity, must still be maintained and endured, though deplored as a necessary evil, you will, notwithstanding, as truly as the author, desire the establishment of universal peace, and a good understanding between all nations. You will desire it, for the sake of thousands and millions, who have nothing to gain, but every thing to lose by that scourge of nations; you will desire it for the honour of our race, who seem hitherto to have merited no better character than that of being murderers and tormentors of each other; an accusation which would be slander upon the savage beasts of the forest; you will desire it for the sake of our own youthful and happy country, whose guilt and depravity

would be increased, and whose happiness could not but be diminished by war.

You will perceive that the arguments against taking away life, are principally drawn from two sources :—the authority of the Gospel, and the consideration of a future state. If the Gospel be true, and of divine origin, its authority must be considered as supreme, by every Christian; and that it forbids all resistance, retaliation, revenge, and war, cannot well be denied. If there be a future state of eternal rewards and punishments, and if all men are actually on probation, and will be unalterably sentenced to one or the other of those states, according to their conduct; and if there be some hope, as long as life continues, that a wicked man, however abandoned he may be to every vice, may yet repent and become a subject of eternal felicity; there surely cannot be a stronger argument that his life should be spared. And this is the true ground on which the Gospel forbids the taking of life. It is indeed because “life and immortality are brought to light.”

And, gentlemen, I appeal to your good understanding and philanthropy, whether the eternal happiness of a wretch, who is brought to the scaffold, is not an object infinitely more excellent, interesting, and glorious in prospect, than any conceivable good which may result to society from his execution. Let him be confined, but let him live; let him reform, if he will, and to this end let him be instructed. The immortal ethereal spirit may yet be purified, and, like a beautiful insect from the carcass of a dying worm, may rise to glory. Perhaps, even after the flight of ten thousand ages, some one of you may meet him, a bright intelligence in some exalted sphere, and may, even at that distant period, receive his thanks for having used your influence or authority to protract his life.

I am, gentlemen, with great respect,

Your most obedient servant,

PHILADELPHUS.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

SIR,

A PAMPHLET has lately appeared before the Public, entitled "*A solemn Review of the Custom of War.*" This pamphlet has, very recently, been followed by another, from the same author, entitled "*The Friend of Peace.*:" comprising a Dialogue and several letters addressed to the President of the United States. Independent of the importance of the question which these pamphlets agitate, the author has evinced talents, as an essayist, of no common grade; and whatever may be thought of the correctness of his opinions, he has manifested a benevolence of heart, and a zeal for the good of mankind, which would do honour to any cause, and which entitles him to public consideration.

The object of this writer is to show, that war of every description is contrary to the laws of Christ, and, of course, inconsistent with the character of a Christian.—He expresses a belief, that, if Christians, as a body, would withdraw their support from war, and bear a public and united testimony against it, it would go far towards abolishing a custom, on the whole, productive of no good, but of incalculable evil to mankind.

These opinions, Sir, though their seeming novelty gives them an appearance of boldness, and, considering the belief and practice of the Christian world may expose them to the imputation of temerity, are by no means *new*. In various periods of the Church they have been suggested by men of reflection, learning, and philanthropy. Particularly since the revival of letters and the Reformation, they have, at times, been boldly avowed and vigorously maintained by several men, to whom the cause of civilization and religion has been indebted for their more successful exertions in other respects.

The strong current of opinion, prejudice, and passion, however, has borne away, and silenced the few voices which have been lifted on this interesting subject; and I am persuaded has kept a far greater number in silence, who, had they spoken, would have been advocates for *peace*, on similar grounds. For, Sir, I am induced to believe, that there are few real Christians, who are men of much reflection, and

are in the habit of examining their opinions in the light of truth and evidence, who have not, at times, entertained some doubts whether war, in any shape whatever, be consistent with the genuine spirit of Christianity.

For myself, I beg leave to say to your Excellency, that my own opinions have long been inclining in that direction: that recent events, considered in connexion with the bloody revolutions in Europe, have led me to a more careful scrutiny of the subject, the result of which has been a full and unwavering conclusion, that war *in every form*, is incompatible with the laws of Christ, and, of course, with the Christian character. The pamphlets to which I allude, though they presented nothing new of the nature of argument, and though they give but a rapid outline of the subject, disclose the thoughts and feelings of a great and vigorous mind: they exhibit a bold and striking contour of that sanguinary monster, *war*, which has long desolated the earth, which is the genuine offspring of hell, and which makes the two regions resemble each other.

Such, Sir, being my convictions and firm belief relative to this subject; and, perceiving there are many other persons of the same opinion, it is natural for me to ask, and it is important for me to know, what course I ought to take, as a Christian and as an honest man. For, surely, if Christians ought to have no concern with war, but to bear testimony against it; if the view which these pamphlets take of war be correct, and I believe it is; then the visible Church of Christ must be in a state of deep and alarming declension. She must have put off the Spirit of Christ, and put on the spirit of the world; and that in its very worst form, and most virulent character. This declension, also, must have been of long standing, commencing but two or three centuries after Christ: it must have resisted the Reformation, and brought down its blood-stained insignia to this day.

Well may every man who feels the conviction of the author of the pamphlets, ask himself, what course he shall take to give his opinions publicity and prevalence. The benefits accruing to the Church and to nations, considered as such, would be truly immense, were they adopted through Christendom. And there are many reasons to believe, that exertions for accomplishing an object so truly grand and glorious, would meet with divine approbation, and be crowned with success. When it is the cause of truth and of God that is pursued, let no man sit down to count upon difficulties, before he do his duty.

Luther encountered the corruptions of Rome, fortified by the wealth and power of Europe. Clarkson, by whose exertions the slave-trade was abolished in Great Britain, was not appalled by the obvious difficulty and hazard of the enterprise; and let those who would know what the persevering exertions of one man can accomplish, read the life and the benevolent labours of Howard. I mention these men to show, that though a man should find himself standing alone, in a world of error, he is not to be deterred from efforts at reformation, merely by the probability of ill success, or the weakness of the means to be employed.

If the Christian Church in its various sections and members, has long lain under the divine displeasure, for rushing with eagerness into wars, set on foot to gratify pride and ambition; if war in itself adds incalculably to the number and weight of human calamities; and if a due abhorrence of war, and the prevalence of pacific sentiments, would no less benefit nations as bodies politic, than the Church as a religious community, it surely is the duty of every one viewing things in this light, to spare no exertions to effect a change of sentiment.

Who can see the face of the earth drenched in human blood, under the fatal influence of an error, which Christians and even the ministers of Christ themselves, have long cherished, and not be roused to make at least one exertion in the cause of bleeding, suffering humanity? Dreadful indeed is the account which many professors of Christianity must give, when they shall appear before God, in judgment, with their garments stained with blood. The pure, peaceful, and holy religion, which they absurdly professed, and by which they vainly expected acceptance in the hour of trial, will certainly condemn them, and the Prince of peace will say to them, *"depart from me, I know you not!"* "Depart from me, ye bloody men, ye have no interest in my kingdom! ye bear no resemblance to my character!"

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER II.

SIR,

THERE is no fact which rests on better historical evidence, than that the members of the Christian Church, during the two first centuries of the Christian era, took no part in the

wars of those times. They refused to fight from scruples of conscience; because their principles were fundamentally pacific: and they were subjects of a "kingdom which was not of this world." It is equally evident, that, during the last glorious period of the Church on earth, when Christ shall reign a thousand years, Christians will not fight, and there shall be no wars. I cannot but believe that when the Church threw aside her pacific character, harnessed herself for battle, and rushed into the bloody field, she sealed her apostacy with blood, and from that day to this has worn a garb foreign to her proper character, and derogatory to the honour and interest of her King.

The greatest and most rapid spread of Christianity, was during that period when Christians did not interfere with war, and whilst they would, in fact, suffer death rather than make resistance. But when Constantine professed faith in Christ,—when the Church was decorated with the imperial purple,—when her coffers were filled with gold,—when armies obeyed her mandate, and war thundered in her voice; she soon became a repudiated harlot, and then the true Church of Christ retired to the wilderness.

The haughty, ambitious, and warlike spirit of the Church has done incalculable mischief in every subsequent age; causing myriads of infidels in her own bosom;—causing seditions, schisms and apostacies without number;—animosity, turbulence, and confusion without end. And what an impediment Christian wars and bloodshed has ever raised to the conversion of the heathen! "For surely," say the heathen nations, "if these Christians conduct agreeably to their religion, that religion must be the worst on earth—must be a system of treachery and blood: but if they who profess, do not obey it, why should we?"

To these just reproaches we can only make the shabby reply, that Christians do not act agreeably to their profession; a reply which, though it may satisfy us, can by no means save our holy religion from the most injurious imputations. Indeed, so closely has Christianity been associated with pride, ambition, revenge, and war, that a far more enlightened, candid, and impartial discrimination, was necessary, than could be hoped for among heathen, to distinguish the character of Christian nations from their profession.

But what is chiefly to be lamented, is, that nations calling themselves *Christian*, have spent as many millions of money to conquer and enslave, as they have pounds to convert the heathen.

But, alas! was it my object to explore and illustrate causes for grief connected with the system of war, I might swell these communications into volumes filled with "lamentation, mourning and wo." These, and a thousand similar topics, might be urged as auxiliary arguments against war. But the exigence of the case, which is truly awful, requires that *war of every description be shown to be contrary to the laws of Christ, inconsistent with the Christian character,—incompatible with the highest good of nations,—entirely unnecessary and unreasonable.*

It is beyond all measure desirable, that Christians, as a body, should be convinced of *this*: that civil magistrates, legislators, and the rulers of states and nations, should view this subject in its immense importance, and unite their exertions to restore the Christian Church to its primitive order; to restore the world to peace; to restore to man the native beauty and grandeur of his character.

Nor do I believe the abolition of the custom of war, by the consent of nations, an event so improbable as some may imagine; especially when I consider that the reign of the Prince of Peace throughout the earth cannot be far distant: and it is by no means improbable that that glorious day will have a gradual commencement.

And, Sir, if in the comparatively short run of two centuries, the Millennium shall have been fully ushered in, and you well know that all calculation founded on prophecy falls within that limit, are we not authorized to believe that new and great events will tread, as it were, on the heels of each other; and will soon begin to assume an unequivocal complexion? Allow me to go further, and ask, In what country is it more likely the first symptoms of that grand period will appear than in this?

The unpopularity, nay, the abolition of war, depends on one idea:—The noble, the benevolent, the magnanimous thought, that *man shall cease to kill his brother*: and how far that thought corresponds with that grand and perfect law, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*," I leave it for every one to judge.

I have no doubt it is a fact, and I hope to make it obvious in the sequel of these letters, that as war originated in the malicious and murderous temper of Cain, so it is perpetuated by the mere tyranny of custom and the indulgence of the worst of passions: and that, on the whole, a liberal and enlightened system of civil policy, no less than the precepts of the gospel, would make the taking of human life, unlawful and odious, in all cases whatever.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER III.

Taking Life not required by Divine Authority.

SIR,

THE most popular, as well as the most forcible argument, in favour of war, is, that it is *sometimes necessary*. This necessity is urged, if I mistake not, from two principles;

1. The law of God, as revealed in the scriptures: and,
2. The natural law of self-preservation; which also is considered of divine origin.

To take away the life of a man, is war. The murderer wages offensive war: the court of justice which condemns him to death, wages defensive war. I propose this extreme case, for the obvious reason, that, if it be right to put a man to death for any crime he may commit, defensive war is right; and, of course, that war is sometimes necessary.

Concerning this argument in favour of war, I submit to your consideration the following observations.

All mankind are naturally free, equal, and independent. The form of government which God gave to the Hebrew nation, together with many of their laws, has long since passed away, and we have now no other form of civil government than what is usually styled a *social compact*. It is believed that a nation has a right to assemble *en masse*, or by delegation, and adopt such a form of government, and such laws and regulations, as the majority may approve: provided, however, that none of their laws are contrary to the law of God, or supervene a divine institution.

Such parts of the Jewish laws as are evidently local, and applicable only to that nation, are unquestionably repealed. On the other hand, such parts as are obviously of universal application and perpetual obligation are not repealed, and such are the ten commands, usually styled the Decalogue.

Concerning the penal code of the Jews, it is here necessary to premise,

1. That several of the penal laws are obviously repealed, because they were local, or ceremonial:

2. That several of the penalties are repealed, although the laws themselves are still in force, as moral precepts.

Our grand desideratum is, to know what part of the Mosaic penal code it is proper for us to retain and adopt. The moral obligation of the decalogue is certainly not to be ques-

tioned: but how far the penalties annexed to it, under the Jewish dispensation, are to be retained, is a radical question, and goes to the point of our present inquiry. Under the Jewish dispensation, seven of the commands of the decalogue were capitally penal: a transgression of either of the first seven, was punishable with death.

Modern and Christian legislatures have a right, or have not to annex the *same penalties* to those precepts. To say they have no right, goes directly *ad petitionem principii*. But if they have a right, then one of two grounds must be taken. Either, *first*, they are clothed with that right; discretionarily, and may use, or not use it, as they please: or, *secondly*, they are clothed with it absolutely, and are left at no option, but are compelled by Divine Authority to use it, whenever the crime occurs, under pain of becoming accessory to the crime.

Now, Sir, the light of day is not more obvious, than that the Hebrew legislature were clothed with no such discretionary power, to take life or not to take it, for the above crimes. When the crime was evidently committed, the judge had nothing to do but to pronounce sentence: for he was but the organ of Divine Authority. And as far as the authority of the law of Moses is concerned, I hope and trust that no such discretionary power will be contended for, for any Christian tribunal.

I therefore confidently trust that the ground, taken for the defence of Christian legislatures in the constitution of their penal code, will be this, that they punish murder with death; while they remit the Mosaic penalty annexed to the other six precepts of the decalogue, not because they have a discretionary right to punish with death, and do not see fit to use it, but because the penalty of the other six precepts has been repealed or rescinded, by God himself, while that of murder still remains.

The reason, then, why idolatry, blasphemy, breach of sabbath, abuse of parents, and adultery, are not by our laws punished with death, is because it is presumed the Divine Authority does not require it, under the gospel dispensation, as it certainly did under the Law. On the contrary, the reason why our laws punish murder with death, is because it is presumed the Divine Authority requires it; that penalty not being rescinded.

I am now, Sir, prepared to ask, since in six precepts out of seven, capital punishment is rescinded and done away, why is it, or by what authority is it retained in one; viz. that of

murder? It surely will not be contended that the Almighty infinitely wise Ruler has clothed our tribunals with a discretionary power to remit or retain these penalties : as I have noticed the Hebrew legislature was clothed with no such power.

Does not the penalty of murder derive its permanence from the authority of the moral law? Surely not : Since the penalty of six of the precepts of that law are acknowledged to be done away. But from what part of the New Testament do we learn that the penalty of six precepts of the decalogue is rescinded; and *one* retained? I answer, from no part : nor is there a sentence, nor a sentiment in all the New Testament which favours such a construction.

The fact seems to be this : The New Testament recognizes the precepts of the decalogue as forming a body of *moral*, not of *civil* law ; fully acknowledging its high and perpetual obligation ; but regarding its violation as sin against God, and not as crime punishable by civil tribunals. In this light the gospel system assumes and incorporates with itself every precept of the Mosaic law, which is obviously of general and perpetual obligation : but it regards the transgression of them in the light of *sins* against God, and not of *crimes* amenable to society.

When the mission of the Messiah was accomplished, "the sceptre departed from Judah," and the Jewish civil government, whose origin and constitution were divine, passed away, to give place to the gospel kingdom, which was to consist "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

You will recollect, Sir, that our Saviour, even before the Roman tribunal, declared himself a King : at the same time, he declared that *his kingdom was not of this world*. I need take no time to show that the kingdom of Christ is his Church. The phrase, *not of this world*, has been too long and too well understood, to need in this place an exposition or defence. The Church of Christ is a spiritual kingdom ; its laws are moral, and their sanctions are spiritual, divine, and eternal.

The Gospel is a system of pure and perfect benevolence. Its first grand law, which is but the spirit of the Mosaic laws concentrated and purified from mixtures, is supreme love to God : the second is substantially the same, though objectively different, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The penalties and sanctions of the Mosaic dispensation indicated not a moral or spiritual, so much as a civil government ; and respected crimes against society, rather than sins against

God. In a far different light does the gospel, and in fact the government which Christ has instituted over his kingdom, contemplate transgressions : i. e. not as *crimes*, but as *sins*.

Sir, I cannot but felicitate myself even more than Paul did when he addressed Agrippa, not that I would institute any personal comparison, because I not only know you to be "expert in all customs and questions," but have full confidence that you feel a sacred regard for the Church of Christ. And should I express a confidence unbecoming the occasion, in matters about which there is a diversity of opinion, I am sure your benevolence will not fail to ascribe it to the ardour of my feelings on a subject of such importance. And if I should at any moment seem to lose sight of an earthly dignity, for whom I feel the greatest respect, it is because I know I speak in the presence of the King of kings : and I wish faithfully to plead for the suffering interests of his kingdom, which consisteth in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

The ancient Law of Retaliation abolished by the Gospel.

SIR,

IN the early ages of the world, God saw fit to distinguish a *family*, above the other families of the earth. He took them from among the nations, adopted them as his people, and condescended to charge himself with the office of being their king, their civil ruler and head. He gave them a system of laws and regulations, some of which were given in condescension to their weakness, ignorance, and prejudice ; some for the hardness of their hearts ; some as a punishment for their wickedness : as the whole code was loaded with bloody rites, ceremonies, and penalties ; a yoke which St. Peter, Acts xv. 10. declares, neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. But they were adapted to the nation to whom they were given, and were blended with many privileges of incalculable value.

Some of the laws of this system our Saviour declares were given to them for the hardness of their hearts ; and some of them, God himself, by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel, declares, *were not good*. "*I gave them statutes which were*

not good, and judgments by which they should not live," Ezek. xx. 25. The meaning of which doubtless is, that they were not good in themselves; but were such as God, in his sovereign displeasure, saw fit to impose upon a stiff-necked, rebellious nation. The heavy and tremendous penalties attached both to moral and positive precepts, in this system, formed one of its characteristic features.

The *lex talionis*, that is, the principle of rendering *like for like*, or in plain words, *the law of revenge*, was fully recognized, and abundantly interwoven throughout the Mosaic penal code. This law is most sententiously expressed, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning, limb for limb, and head for head."

God has at all times a right to punish the wicked in whatever way and by whatever instrument he pleases. He therefore, beyond all doubt, had a right to establish the *lex talionis*, in the penal code of this nation, which long before the time of Moses, had been adopted by other nations; and is defended by many under the dignified character of the law of nature. In what sense it is the law of nature, I shall in a subsequent letter explain; but that it is explicitly abolished, and done away by the gospel, I now proceed to show.

That a man should love his neighbour as himself, is the second grand pillar of the gospel. This noble pillar, Sir, is no where inscribed with *LEX TALIONIS*. Instead of that bloody inscription, the man foaming with hatred, and panting for revenge, is often shocked and confounded to see in large characters "*RENDER NOT EVIL FOR EVIL:*" and elsewhere, "*Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*"

With regard to the law of retaliation, our Saviour is explicit, Mat. v. 38. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, *that ye resist not evil*; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."

But, "No," says the modern Christian, "If a man strike me, I will knock him down, if I can:—if he seize and detain by law, I will replevin my goods, and make him pay cost: if he injure me, I will injure him with interest."

Sir, the grand question is, whether the Christian has a right to repel injury by injury; or in other words, to render evil for evil. I know the subtilty of the civilian has invented

a plaster ; but, as well might an insect hope to cover the sun with its spreading wings. The lawyer tells us about *damnum absque injuria* : i. e. if a man attempts to kill me, and I kill him in my own defence, that to him is *damnum*, but not *injuria* :—*damage* but not *injury*. Will this evasion answer in that court where eternal light and justice prevail ? Will not the Almighty Judge say, “ I commanded you not to resist evil : instead of which, you made resistance and killed a man. Had you obeyed my command, I could have defended you ; and, if I had not, which would have been preferable, for you to have died in obedience to me, or by a rebellious act, to send a soul to endless perdition ? ”

“ Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil.” What sort of *evil* and of *resistance* is here intended by Christ, is explained in the subsequent verses. “ But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man shall sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.” It is worthy of observation, that Christ here gives two very different cases of violence. The first is, personal violence, commonly the result of sudden passion, as when one man strikes another. The second is obviously a case of legal violence, where an unjust and vexatious lawsuit is commenced.

In these and similar cases, resistance is forbidden. And, Sir, I speak to you with more pleasure and confidence, from your great and just reputation in legal science ; assured that you fully comprehend the principles of law, and see remotely into their consequences. I trust that before you I may safely affirm, that our Saviour, in the cases he here gives, evidently intends to establish a principle, from which his followers were not to depart. A rule of conduct for a great and extensive society of people, to be perpetuated through all ages, and to extend through all nations, in relation to *injury* and *violence*, must form, at least, one of the chief characteristics of that society. No wonder, therefore, that this great Law-giver, was very explicit. The rule was, *that they should not resist injury and violence*. Or to reverse the celebrated saying of the Roman orator, “ *vis non defenditur a vi*.”

The all-wise Saviour, in laying down this great rule, seems to have been aware of the art and power of perversion. He so worded it, therefore, as perfectly to defeat the evasion attempted from the above cited principle of *damnum absque injuria* : which supposes that when a man attacks me and I kill him, my object is not to *kill*, but merely to *defend* : that

I may, at the same moment, deplore the necessity of substituting his life for mine, and though I hurt, I do him no injustice. The divine Lawgiver absolutely forbids *resistance*, and predicates the injunction on that idea. He does not go about to say, that we must defend, strike, beat, and kill, with great moderation; taking care to feel no malice, no desire to give pain for its own sake; that we must weed out from among our motives and passions every thing but a pure desire to secure ourselves. "But I say unto you, *that ye resist not evil.*" A blow on the right cheek, is evil;—knocking out an eye or a tooth, is evil;—taking away from a man his coat, is evil;—but they are evils not to be resisted, or our Saviour's words mean nothing.

In reply to this, it will perhaps be said, that these evils are not to be redressed by unlawful or informal means. The divine Lawgiver has anticipated, and answered this evasion. For one of the cases he mentions, is a case of legal violence or oppression. "*If a man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*" than which no words can more strongly forbid retaliation? i. e. answering suit by suit, and repelling injury by injury.

As personal violence was not to be resisted nor resented; as property, when torn away by unjust legal process, was to be quietly surrendered; so when a man's liberty was restrained, a meek and unqualified submission to the bondage was expressly enjoined; so far at least as to exclude every kind of appeal to force for its recovery. I have reserved the notice of this last circumstance to this place, as it is distinct in its nature from the others, and forms a gradation, I may say a complete climax, embracing every topic in the doctrine of non-resistance. "*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*" You will be aware, Sir, that the bold, liberal, and impressive oriental style is here used, as in the case of the coat and cloak. It will certainly not be understood, that the Christian, when some of his property is taken away, is of his own accord to double the sum; or that when his liberty is restrained awhile, he must voluntarily protract or double the term of his *duresse*: far from it. If that would be overstraining the generous and ardent style of the Evangelist, which as much disdains the pedantic monotony of cold criticism, as it tramples in the dust the pride and selfishness of human ambition; how does that Christian obey Christ's law, who is quick to resent injury and repel force by force; who, when his property is invaded, only abandons the pursuit of redress, far within the invader's territory, crowning

his full recovery with damages and cost, and sweetening his triumph with revenge; and who, when his liberty is assailed, instead of going the *second mile*, would pour out the last drop of his own blood, and that of his assailant, rather than go one rod?

How can such a Christian hold up his head before the judgment seat of Christ, who has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments?" who has said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls!"

From the many passages with which the New Testament abounds, I have selected a few, which go fully to prove the doctrine of non-resistance. Whether life, liberty, or property, are invaded, by sudden violence, or by the more deliberate operation of legal process, the Christian is expressly forbidden to seek redress by the application of force in any form.

Sir, if the authority of Christ be allowed to be divine, and of course supreme, no law was ever more expressly repealed than the law of retaliation, by which injuries are repelled, or grievances redressed by force; and the character and conduct of the primitive Christians afford an exemplification of the doctrine of non-resistance, and a confirmation of the construction I have given of the preceding passages, which, I trust, cannot be denied. Their meek, pacific, and humble deportment developed before the world a new character, a new institution, a new religion; and, while it excited admiration and commanded respect, it also roused resentment and inflamed the spirit of persecution.

In this mild, unresisting, benevolent, and truly pacific character, the Church of Christ was founded, in the midst of enemies, and flourished amidst the severest storms of persecution. They calmly surrendered their goods when demanded, their liberty when invaded, and their lives when assailed.

Tell me, Sir, what exonerates the Church called Christian, at the present day, from obedience to the laws of Christ? Have they procured a new dispensation to *resist*, to *retaliate*, to *kill*, to mingle in all the bloody contests, the wild projects of ambition, which agitate the elements of society? Alas! Sir, Christianity assuredly presents to the world a far different exterior from what it did in the primitive Church, when Christians *did not resist injury by violence, nor engage in war*.

And where is the difficulty? what hinders their assuming, at once, the simplicity, meekness, and pacific character

commanded by Christ, and exemplified by the apostles and primitive Christians? Nothing but pride, ambition, and worldly lusts. Such a state would be as truly beneficial to the Church, in reference to her spread and prosperity, as it would be to the advancement of the Redeemer's glory.

Sir, there is a grandeur, a magnanimity, a purity, and glory, in the primitive Christian character, which nothing on earth ever equalled. If the state of society, and general texture and character of nations and governments, in the first ages of the Church, rendered the meek and unresisting Christian peculiarly obnoxious to contempt and danger; the present state of civilization and manners in Christendom, affords innumerable facilities and inducements to adopt that character, which, at first, was deemed essential to the Christian. Comparatively speaking, there is now nothing in the way, and the present state and respectable standing of the society called Quakers, who disclaim all war, is a proof that Christians might assume that character with safety.

But what did I say? with safety! Gracious and Almighty Redeemer, forgive an expression which seems to imply, that our personal security is first to be consulted, and then thine awful authority? where is safety to be found, but in obedience? To obey, is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.

Sir, how deplorably have Christians forgotten that reiterated declaration of Christ, "He that will save his own life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall find it." It is this false and hollow estimate of safety, which raises an impediment among Christians to the pacific and unresisting character. They say, "If I do not resist, I shall be crushed—if I do not defend myself and property, wicked men will take *all away*." They seem to have lost all confidence in that Almighty Protector, who, when his own glory required it, was able to defend the three children in the consuming flame of a furnace. But as the doctrine of self-preservation is generally considered as intimately connected with the *lex talionis*, and as both are regarded by many as parts of the great law of nature, I shall take notice of it in a subsequent letter.

I hope, Sir, I have adduced sufficient evidence from the New Testament, that those parts of the Mosaic law, which admitted of resisting injury by the application of force in any form, are repealed by Christ, and that Christians are *preremptorily forbidden to resist evil*.

This being admitted, Sir, the fountain of human blood, which has so incessantly flowed by the hand of man, is in a measure stanchèd. From these constructions it is, as well as from the whole tenor, drift, and spirit of the New Testament, that the capital and sanguinary penalties of many of the Jewish laws, and particularly of the six precepts of the Decalogue, above noticed, are justly considered as rescinded and done away. The Christian regards those laws as of moral and irrefragable obligation; but that their ancient penalties are not to be inflicted by a Christian tribunal.

Precisely the same reasons which release a Christian tribunal from inflicting capital punishment for the violation of *six precepts of the Decalogue*, release the same tribunal from obligation to punish capitally for murder, or the seventh. For they all stand on the same footing,—divine authority: they stand connected on the same level, in the same code of laws; were equally pronounced in thunder, by the voice of God, from Mount Sinai; and their transgression was equally punishable with death under the Jewish dispensation. And I deem it necessary only to add that there is no precept, and no hint in the gospel, which makes an exception of *one*, with a view to retain its penalty, in distinction from the rest.

The gospel is a dispensation of mercy: its grand law is love: its great author was the messenger of life and not of death: he came not to condemn, but to pardon; not to destroy, but to save, and to give his life a ransom for many. The law dispensation is justly called the ministration of death: it abounded in bloody sacrifices, and bloody rites, and was, as a system of civil government, supported and sanctioned by bloody penalties. These were altogether abolished in Christ, and the last blood sanctioned by the divine law, flowed in the blood of the atonement.

That I take not too high ground in this assertion, I think, will appear by the following distribution, or analysis, of the foregoing observations.

1st,—It is granted on all hands, that the sacrifices and bloody rites of the ceremonial law were abolished.

2d,—The gospel no where recognizes and incorporates, as its own, one of the penalties of the Jewish civil or criminal code: because the gospel makes no provision for the organization and constitution of a form of civil government: whence the gospel recognizes no transgression in any other light than as a sin against God.

3d,—Our tribunals, which claim the right of punishing with

death, do not pretend that the authority of the Decalogue, simply considered, is sufficient to warrant capital punishment. For in fact the Decalogue prescribes no punishment ; *it only commands.*

4th,—The penalties annexed to several precepts of the Decalogue, are found in other parts of the law ; but our tribunals do not infer their right to put to death from the fact, that God expressly commanded the Hebrews to punish, with death, the transgression of seven precepts of the Decalogue, for they dispense with six of those penalties.

5th,—Therefore, most certainly, our tribunals do not punish murder with death, because God commanded Moses to do so ; for God commanded Moses also to put to death for idolatry, blasphemy, breach of sabbath, adultery, &c. Nor,

6th,—Do our laws punish with death, because a warrant can be found for it in the gospel ; for no such warrant can be found : on the contrary, the precepts of the gospel are incompatible with taking the life of any man.

7th,—In a word, the power to take life, argued from the law of Moses, was a power interwoven with a frame of government and system of civil and religious policy, instituted by God, and given to a particular nation for a time, but has long since passed away. The moral principles and precepts of that ancient code are fully recognized by the gospel, and the violation of them as sins against God, but in no manner as civil crimes.

The gospel, Sir, makes no provision for the organization and constitution of civil government ; nor does it make any more allusion to this subject than to any other human art, science, or enterprise. Nor was it at all necessary it should, since the Supreme Christian Ruler came not upon earth to interfere with earthly kingdoms, but to set up a moral and spiritual kingdom, whose laws, sanctions, rewards, and punishments, were to correspond with the nature of that kingdom.

Though the gospel makes no direct provision for organizing civil governments, yet it throws a glorious and refulgent light upon the councils and deliberations of those who may assemble for the purpose of framing civil states and commonwealths. With divine and benignant smile, it cherishes every human enterprise evidently tending to promote man's felicity. It fully recognizes the natural freedom and equality of all men, and leaves them to adopt such civil and municipal regulations as may conduce to social happiness.

And, Sir, if our legislatures and tribunals would turn their eyes towards the laws of Christ, and regard his gospel as the

fountain of light and wisdom, I think they would leave the work of shedding human blood to the murderer, and the assassin, who delight in blood.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER V.

Retaliation, and the motives to it, unjustifiable.

SIR,

IF it shall appear, upon due examination, that taking away life has no other foundation than the penalties of the Jewish law ; some of which are repealed in express terms, and all of which except one,* by the abolition of the civil state upon which, they were imposed, are rendered unobligatory, as the practice of our tribunals concedes ; it must be granted that the doctrine of capital punishment cannot be supported from the law of Moses.

In reply to this it will be said, that the punishing of murder by death, rests on a more ancient law than that of Moses, but equally divine. The declaration of God to Noah, Gen. ix. 6, *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, is supposed to be a sufficient reason for distinguishing one precept of the Decalogue by retaining its penalty, while that of the other precepts is acknowledged to be cancelled in the change of dispensations.

I am sorry, Sir, to be compelled to say, that such is the eagerness of men to shed blood, and their consequent avidity to call up and improve to the most effectual purpose every ray of evidence which seems to favour the practice, that they are scarcely willing to hear with patience and weigh with candour, the immense body of evidence which goes to abolish this sanguinary practice.

The declaration of God to Noah, above cited, is generally considered not only as a full warrant for putting a murderer to death, but of the force of a divine law from which there can be no release. Whatever might have been the intention of this declaration, one would suppose that a believer in the New Testament could not fail to perceive, that it followed the course and shared the fate of the other precepts of the Jew-

* I here refer to the Decalogue.

ish dispensation, whose penalties incurred death. Some suppose this declaration, "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," is to be received rather in the light of a prediction than a law: rather as a general indication of the views and consequent conduct of society, relative to murder, than as imposing a divine obligation to put a murderer to death.

If this precept be attentively considered, it will, I am persuaded, Sir, in your own estimation, want several characteristics indispensable to a criminal law. Here was no legal tribunal; no part of the *modus operandi* laid down; nothing definite; and, to say the most, it must have remained among the *leges non scriptæ*, probably till the time of Moses. Grotius, *Lib. De jure Pacis et Belli*, 1st, 2nd, is of the opinion, that this declaration of God to Noah, was simply a recognition of the *lex talionis*, to which express allusion is made so early as the history of Cain. When Cain was pleading with God for a mitigation of his punishment, he says, Gen. iv. 14, *And every one that findeth me shall slay me*: i. e. because he had killed his brother Abel.

Of the declaration of God to Noah, "Therefore," says Grotius, "*Naturale jus talionis, hic indicatur*;" i. e. the natural right of retaliation is here indicated. As it is the first rule of philosophising, that we are to look for no more causes of a thing than are sufficient to account for its phenomenon; and as the law or principle of retaliation of injuries was known among men long before the flood; and as this declaration to Noah, does in fact involve no other principle than simply that of retaliation in kind: as eye for eye, tooth for tooth, limb for limb, and blood for blood; the exposition of this passage, given by Grotius, seems to be correct.

The retaliation of injuries in kind, was certainly a prominent trait in the law of Moses, and was expressly recognized by Divine Authority. Will it then be thought wonderful; and what triumph does it afford the argument for shedding blood, when it is discovered, that it was admitted as early as the time of Noah? From ages of darkness we are surely not to look back into ages of still more palpable gloom for greater light. When the practice of taking life for life, or of killing one man because he had killed another, commenced, we cannot certainly tell: but probably not much later than when a good man was murdered for his supereminent virtue. In whatever state of society a good man was liable to be killed for nothing but his goodness, it cannot be presumed that the bloody passion for revenge would long slumber. Therefore

Cain, it seems, was tormented by fear for his own life. as well as by a consciousness of his guilt: he feared, to use his own words, "lest every one who found him should slay him."

I would ask those who are so zealous in tracing up the practice of taking life for life, to God's immediate order or inspiration, and of course to a divine institution, which discovery is most suitable to the genius of man; whether the art of killing a good man merely for his goodness sake, or that of killing a man by way of revenge, because he had killed some innocent person? I think, in the latter case, we need be at no great pains to discover any supernatural inspiration; unless we were inclined to ascribe it to the inspiration of him "who was a murderer from the beginning;" and who by way of eminence is called *the destroyer*, or Apollyon.

Though the retaliation of injuries, extending even to the ultimate act of *life for life*, must have been prevalent in the antediluvian world; it is not very probable that there were any regular, or what we should term legal tribunals. It might have been, and probably was, in those rude times, as it now is among some tribes of savages, where the murderer must be slain by the nearest kinsman of the murdered man: and this opinion seems confirmed by the fears expressed by Cain. Or perhaps, resting on a still looser principle, it was considered that any person, the very next he should meet, had a right to kill the murderer.

Let us, Sir, if you please, look more attentively at the boasted right of retaliation, which Grotius, in the above passage, has styled, *jus naturale talionis*, i. e. the natural right of retaliation. Let us endeavour to see what are its true lineaments, and what its aspect and influence on Society. It is generally considered as inseparably connected with, and justified by, the law of self-preservation: and is contended for as taught by nature, and approbated by God. Cicero, than whom no writer speaks of it with more eloquence and force, says, *Orat. pro. Mil.* p. 316. "Hoc et ratio doctis, et necessitas barbaris, et mos gentibus, et feris naturæ ipsæ præscripsit, ut omnem semper vim, quacunque ope possent, a corpore, a capite, a vita sua propulsarent." "Reason has taught this to the learned, necessity to the barbarian, custom to all nations, and nature itself to the wild beasts, that they should always repel all violence, by all means in their power, from their body, their head, and their life."

If to offer violence to an innocent person without provocation, may be considered as a dictate of a nature fallen and depraved, we surely need ascend no higher to look for motives

for repelling injury and taking revenge. And we shall at once perceive, that a world filled with violence and outrage, must also inevitably abound with retaliation and vengeance: that aggression and retaliation in a race of creatures naturally unjust, cruel, and passionate, must go hand in hand.

Sir, it will not be contended that retaliation is a crime of equal atrocity with that of original aggression. Wanton malice and mischief unprovoked, incur greater guilt than the desire of vengeance carried into act. Yet the motive which leads to retaliation is in itself not founded in the best reason; the disposition with which it is effected, is generally if not always wrong; and its general consequences are always bad. And for these reasons it is, I presume, Sir, repealed by our Saviour, as a rule of action. For,

1. The motives to retaliation are not founded in good reason. They are threefold. *First*, self-defence; *secondly*, to prevent a repetition of the injury; and, *thirdly*, to punish or chastise the aggressor.

A state of rebellion against God, and ignorance of, or hostility to his almighty and universal providence, is the sole reason why men have cast off all reliance on him, and have with so much parade and vain confidence assumed their own preservation as their own care, and to be secured by their own wisdom and bravery. But it will be said in reply to this, that we are not to expect God will work miracles for our defence. Whoever believes the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God to be infinite; and at the same time remembers that he has said, that all things work together for good to them that love him, will feel no other concern about his own safety, provided he love God, than to yield unlimited obedience to his authority. Such a man will know that the Almighty Ruler can defend him without a miracle, or if need be by a miracle.

It is, Sir, this vain and haughty principle of self-defence, which has filled the world with blood and slaughter. It induces preparation, carries hostility on its front, provokes aggression, and after all, generally fails to accomplish its object; for it affords no safety. Individuals or nations, the quickest to resent and the most resolute to retaliate injuries, never fail to receive the most injuries. Could I dwell on this point, I might show from actual details, that the genuine operation and tendency of the *lex talionis*, so much contended for by kings and priests, and statesmen, and heroes, is to destroy men: it is the gulph of destruction. Whereas, the meek and humble, the pacific and magnanimous principle of

forgiveness and non-resistance, in its own nature tends directly to personal security, and reposes under the shadow of Almighty protection and divine approbation.

The common objection to this idea is, that were it known that a man would not resist nor retaliate an injury, he would immediately fall a prey to violence and injustice. It is true he might sometimes suffer from that quarter, but there would be an adequate alleviation of such sufferings. "When ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." But it should be remembered, that the spirit which would prompt a man never to resist nor retaliate, would surely never lead him to be the original aggressor. Those whom kindness or humility could gain, would always be his friends; and those whom his Christian temper might induce to invade him, God would judge in his own time and way.

Those, Sir, who are so noisy about self-defence, seem utterly to forget, or never to have known, that the best, and indeed the only effectual and rational plan of self-defence a man can form, is to *please God*. His omnipotent and infinitely benevolent Providence is always present with a man or a nation: it never slumbers; it is never weary.

"He sees with equal eye, as God of all,
The hero perish or the sparrow fall."

And when the Almighty God beholds mankind proudly slighting his protection; arming for their own defence; summoning up all their impotent courage for war and devastation, he mocks at their wrath, derides their prowess, and often says, "Let them perish in their own devices." Yet earnestly, in his holy word, he expostulates with them: "O that they had hearkened to my commandments, then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea."

On this ground the case of the midnight robber and assassin is often brought forward; and it is urged with seeming triumph: "What! if I awake at midnight, and find a man in my house murdering my children and robbing my house, shall I not defend with whatever weapon I can?" This case is specious, and it carries away the mind with the terrors of its appearance. But, Sir, let the conduct of the primitive Christians answer this question. Did that principle of self-preservation, which Tully styles *reason* in the learned, *necessity* in the barbarian, *custom* among nations, and *nature itself* in the wild beasts, prompt them to repel violence when and

where they could, and by whatever weapon? Surely not. They used no other method to repel and overcome evil than that of doing good.

It is said, we are not to expect miracles to defend us. A miracle, Sir, is but a departure from that usual course of Providence, whose most common operations would fill us no less with astonishment and gratitude, were it not for our extreme stupidity. I ask the man who pleads so vehemently for the privilege of repelling violence by force, contrary to the injunction of the Redeemer of the world, *who* preserves him every moment from death? Who causes the planets to revolve, the sun to shine, the earth to vegetate? who causes the pulsations of life through his body, and repairs the incessant waste of arterial energy? who keeps in repair the incomparably delicate and diversified apparatus, requisite to the functions of animal bodies? who impels with such celerity and force the purple current from the citadel of life; through the arteries branching into millions of tenuous tubes, till the microscope can no longer trace them; revolving in countless meanders, till they exactly meet the corresponding extremities of the veins; thence returning the torrent of life through widening and converging channels? what centinel stands at the critical post where the secretory glands are placed to draw from the passing current of the blood their appropriate selection of fluids, so essential to life? In fine, who gives power to that amazing alembic, to transform our daily food into all the solids and fluids of the body; skill to separate, activity to convey them to their several stations? All this, to a careful observer, looks almost like a standing miracle. It is the hand of God.

Sir, the destiny of man is eternal: and every circumstance of the preservation and close of his life, lies in a train of events directed by infinite wisdom. God preserves him: nor is there a moment of his life in which the presence of Almighty power and goodness are not as truly evinced for his preservation, as they would be in defending him from the rage of a midnight robber and assassin, who had broken into his chamber while he slept. This boasted case, so often urged in vindication of self-defence, brings no aid to that doctrine. Is it to be presumed that Christ would be deterred from forbidding his followers to resort to violence in their defence, for fear of what junctures they might fall into, when every man on earth every moment, needs his preserving power no less than the man at the moment he is attacked by a robber?

Besides, those who bring up this case do not seem, to con-

sider, that Divine protection can be exerted as well by preventing an attack, as by repelling violence when offered. The Almighty showed how he can protect in the case of the three children thrown into a furnace of fire ; and in the case of the martyrs he has also shown us that he does not always see fit to defend.

On the whole, the preservation of human life, and a man's security from violence and evil, are matters so immediately connected with Divine power and goodness, that the vehement pretensions of mankind to the right of self-defence, are as arrogant and insolent in the sight of God, as they are absolutely vain and fruitless ; and of course, they are suffered by Divine Providence, to be the cause of the sudden destruction of millions of men. They impiously arrogate, and God in his displeasure gives up to them their preservation. Let us suppose that a man in a single combat, or in battle, fights bravely, but falls. What benefit has he gained ? Men praise his valour, but God condemns his pride, passion, and folly ; and if there be no better parts to his character than those evinced in his last moments, he perishes for ever.

A man rushes into battle, and lays about him with great rage and violence, performs prodigies of valour, perhaps kills a score of men, and escapes unhurt. He retires from battle full of self-complacency ; extols his success ; thinks with high gratulation and self-applause on the safety which his *own arm* afforded him. But all-seeing Providence knows how little thanks he owes to himself for his preservation ; nay, that the security he enjoyed from the dangers of battle, was but a trifling part of the whole of the protection and aid afforded him at that very moment, by that God in whose hand his breath is. A host of enemies, far more formidable than the opposing army, hovers round him, to destroy his life and make war on his soul ; the claim of Divine Justice and eternal wrath hang over him ;—the thunders of God's displeasure murmur round his head, and threaten him with endless perdition. Nothing but a Providence directed by the omnipotent mercy of God, saves him for a moment. And yet, thoughtless creature, he goes away praising the strength of his own arm, as that which brought him salvation.

I have, Sir, dwelt long on this point, as it is one of essential importance to our inquiry : and I shall close by observing, that, aside from the prohibition of our Saviour, the general principles of resistance and retaliation, regarded in their operation on the human race, have destroyed thousands where they have preserved one human life.

It now remains that we notice the other two motives of retaliation as above stated; viz. to prevent the repetition of injuries, and to chastise or punish the aggressor.

I am, Sir, yours, with great respect, &c.

LETTER VI.

Motives for retaliating injury considered.

SIR,

IT is contended that a prompt and vigorous resistance and retaliation, throw round a man or a nation a kind of wall of security, by preventing the repetition of injury. This ground at first view seems plausible, but in fact, nothing was ever more false and hollow: and the operation of the *lex talionis*, ever since the flood, has been to fill the world with quarrels, war, and bloodshed. If we are careful to associate with non-resistance, a meek, inoffensive and benevolent character;—if we suppose the man who does not retaliate injuries, careful never to give offence, nor be the first aggressor, we shall find him, *ceteris paribus*, less liable to receive reiterated injuries than a resentful, revengeful man.

If promptness and ability to retaliate afford so potent a defence for individuals and nations; and if one aggression vigorously retaliated forms so strong a barrier to all future assaults, how has it happened that almost all nations have been almost continually at war? The truth is, stout resistance and severe retaliation, only whet the appetite for revenge; for which an opportunity never fails to be diligently sought and strenuously improved.

What, I ask, has been the potent influence of this wonderful law of nature, this boasted principle of retaliation, to keep peace between France and England? How did it operate upon Rome and Carthage? How did it soothe and calm the feuds and turmoils of the states of Greece?

Sir, the quiet and unresisting principles of the primitive Christians in the very worst of times, and under the most appalling circumstances, show us that the thing is practicable in any state of society; and the universal prevalence of religious toleration at this time, leaves the Christian no plea for adhering to the bloody and revengeful maxims of the world

but his own pride and ambition ; while reason itself, and a correct knowledge of the springs of human action show us, that meekness and forgiveness, carried to the full extent of the laws of Christ, would give every Christian a more quiet and comfortable course of life, than all the powers of resistance and retaliation which men or devils can bring to his aid, can procure him.

If, Sir, an individual or a nation be unjust and wicked enough, to make an attack, without provocation, and chance to be repelled, does that settle the controversy for ever? Alas! it kindles a resentment which will be smothered no longer than a convenient opportunity presents for kindling a new flame. Hence nations, and individuals, who predicate their safety on resistance and war, must hold themselves in continual readiness for the bloody conflict; and hence the painful and melancholy fact, that probably one half of the whole mass of human exertions is directed to the art of killing and injuring men.

The conduct of our race, in these respects, must certainly be matter of admiration and astonishment to all worlds, and must excite the indignation and contempt of the very devils. For, says Milton,

“Devil with devil damned, firm concord hold,

“Men only disagree of creatures rational.”

In a subsequent letter I shall consider the probable influence of the Christian principle of non-resistance, on the state of individuals and nations: but at present shall only observe, that whatever that influence might be, under the present prevalence of moral light and religious toleration, we know what influence it once had, when the Supreme Ruler of the Church and of the world sent forth his disciples as lambs among wolves, and commanded them to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Meek and unresisting as they were, their doctrine spread in opposition to the pride, ambition, hatred, and power of nations, and bore down all before it. In vain did Jewish malice, the Roman sword, or the Grecian philosophy, oppose their barriers; it was the work of God, and though Christians suffered much, they counted it their glory to suffer shame for the name of Christ. They did not presume to say, “If I act agreeably to my principles, I shall suffer one attack after another; nay, I shall lose all that I possess.” They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better inheritance.

The remaining motive to retaliate injuries, and which cer-

tainly is not the least efficient is, *to chastise or punish the offender*. The doctrine, as it is stated in the law of Moses, fully intimates this. "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life: he that sheddeth man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed."

This motive to retaliate injuries, in rude and early ages, while men had little notion of the moral government of God, and still less of a future state of rewards and punishments, seemed to have more consistency, than it can have with Christians. Every Christian knows that the world to come is a state of full and endless retribution, in which the wicked will receive the reward of their iniquities. How then can a Christian desire for a moment to wield the rod of divine Justice, which he knows is held by a hand from which it cannot fall—a hand which has both power and right to wield it? Therefore the command of Christ to the Christian is, "Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

But, Sir, revenge is sweet to our fallen and wretched natures. Nor did the ancients or the moderns, in their vehemence to resist and retaliate, regard any thing so much as that truly diabolical feeling, "*You have hurt me, and I will hurt you as much, cost what it will!*" Whence it happens, in many instances, retaliation is pursued, though at a hundred times the cost of the original injury. But why should a man wish to retaliate with any view to chastisement, unless it be to gratify his own revengeful feelings, since he may be assured it will increase the rage of his adversary, will expose himself to subsequent attacks, and will do nothing towards reforming his enemy?

As far as retaliation relates to chastisement simply, the motive to it can be resolved into but two principles: *one* is to give pain or damage, because the offender deserves to suffer it; the *other* is, because, having given us pain or damage, we are gratified in seeing him suffer as much: which latter enters truly into the spirit of rendering evil for evil; and as it is expressly forbidden, and is contrary to the temper and spirit of the Christian as every where described, I shall take no time to consider it. As to the former, which regards the desert of the offender, I do not hesitate to say, that no Christian, and in fact no man living, whether Christian or not, had he a full view of the weight of divine displeasure which will soon fall on the impenitent sinner, could wish to punish him: his hand lifted to revenge, with whatever rage and resolution

to strike, would fall powerless by his side, at the awful prospect.

The doctrine of retaliation, even as stated in the law of Moses, seems to have no reference to reclaiming, but is altogether *retributive* or vindictive. "*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,*" looks like a summary mode of taking vengeance, and so in fact it was. But especially where the crime was capital, and it was life for life, it had no regard to reformation, but precluded all possibility of it.

I have hitherto made little distinction between the cases of resistance and revenge, whether private and inofficial, or by public authority and the forms of law. Indeed, in the origin of the *lex talionis*, there was little or none: for to revenge injuries was doubtless known among men before there were nations to make laws or to fight each other; and as to retaliate an injury is certainly a less crime than the first aggression, so I make no difficulty in allowing, that a sudden, private, and irregular retaliation is a greater evil than when it is restricted by the forms of a civil court: yet in whatever way a man's life is taken for killing a man, it classifies strictly with those precepts so often quoted, viz. an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; for it is rendering *like for like*: and our Saviour as strictly forbids retaliating by law as by sudden violence, and for one injury as another.

I have, Sir, I trust, shown that to retaliate injuries is not the best way to treat them. For as far as *resistance* and defence are concerned, it never can in one instance promise certain security to life or property, but on the contrary, has been the direct cause of the destruction of millions of lives and a world of property. And were it to be tried on this very principle, viz. the good or hurt it has done, it would be condemned and banished from rational society as the worst of all principles. Moreover, were it to be tried on the second ground, viz. of its tendency to prevent the reiteration of injury, it would certainly fare as ill; for the principle of retaliation directly tends from all the known principles of the human character, to interminable wrath, contention, hatred, and war. And as to the third motive, viz. punishing offenders; let the man whose debt to justice for his own sins is not infinite, talk of punishing. Let a man pray from his heart as our Lord directed, "*Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,*" and he will think little of being the divine executioner; unless he intends to pray that God would punish him. Or indeed, let him look forward to the punishment God has for the wicked, and all his wrath will change to terror, if

not even into pity; and he will say as David said of his enemy, "Let him alone, his time shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish."

Sadoc, the celebrated founder of the sect of the Sadducees, denied the future state of the soul, and therefore insisted on severe retaliation and punishment of all crimes in this life. The sentiment better became a Sadducee than a Christian; and the practice certainly better becomes heathen and savage nations among whom it originated, than the bepevolent, humble, and peaceful followers of the Prince of peace, to whom it is forbidden.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

The desire of retaliation wrong, the consequences bad.

SIR,

The dispositions with which resistance and retaliation are carried into effect, are generally, if not always, wrong. To say the least, it must be directly contrary to that which would induce a man, when he is smitten on one cheek, meekly and magnanimously to turn the other. These commands of our Saviour, Sir, instead of being supposed obligatory on Christians, are generally called up to aid the humour and sarcasm of the professing infidel. I have seldom heard them quoted unless associated with some circumstance fitted to throw them into utter contempt.

How to perform with a right disposition an act which is unnatural, absurd, monstrous, and perhaps shocking even to Devils in its own nature, would require the talents of an able casuist. It must be a baseness and depravation of character, which alone can lay the foundation for unprovoked aggression; a character bearing some affinity to that of Cain, which could induce a man to desire to fall upon his fellow man, and destroy him, under any circumstances whatever. Naturalists have observed that wild beasts, which have no reason nor sense of duty, are generally armed with weapons of defence and annoyance. But man is naturally unarmed: the nobleness, beauty, delicacy, and tenderness of his form, fitted for the conversation even of Angels, and bearing the image of God, indicates the offices of benevolence, goodness, generosity, and kindness.

God made him lovely and beloved; sin has rendered him hateful, revengeful, cruel, and violent. As original and un-

provoked attacks have certainly sprung from depravity of heart, so retaliation and revenge have unquestionably risen from the same polluted source. We may talk of inalienable rights, and of self-preservation—may plead the law of nature in defence of retaliation; and if the charm of eloquence the most fascinating, and of diction the most magnificent, might be suffered to sway and warp the opinions of the Christian, the prince of orators might carry all before him. In speaking of *this law of nature*, he says, “Est enim hæc, judices, non scripta, sed nata lex : quam non didicimus, accipimus, legimus, verum ex natura ipsa arripuimus, hausimus, expressimus : ad quam non docti, sed facti ; non instituti, sed imbuti sumus.”

This, O Tully, is indeed nature’s law ; but it is the law of such a nature as man possesses, before he is created anew in Christ Jesus ! The retaliator’s disposition is wrong, as it simply relates to defence and self-preservation. Let us not think so meanly of the divine Governor, as to imagine he has by a general law, made the safety and happiness of his faithful subjects to depend at all on any violence they must offer to any creature in his kingdom. His omnipotence does not need their aid in this business. He will defend them, and his power and presence renders their efforts as useless as they are arrogant and presumptuous. But as rebels against him, they have lost all confidence in his protection ; nay, they despise and reject it, and prefer to defend themselves ; and their pride and malice derive no small gratification from this hazardous work, which often proves their immediate destruction.

Still more culpable is a disposition to retaliate and avenge an injury, as it relates to punishing the offender. What right have we to desire to punish ? Whoever injures us, sins against God, and the gospel of Christ, as I have already observed, recognizes sins in no other light. Do we fear that God will be too slow or too lenient ? Do we wish to seize the rod of justice, because we fear God will not punish soon enough to answer our ends, or severely enough to gratify our revenge ? Yes, that is the fact. Though God has said, “*Vengeance is mine, I will repay,*” that does not answer our ends at all, since we desire to have a hand in the business.

In fine, Sir, notwithstanding all that is, or can be said about self-preservation, and justice to others, I have no doubt, that the *jus naturale talionis*, the whole and entire doctrine and practice of the retaliation of injuries, is founded on human pride, passion and cruelty. It is indeed very congenial to

the fallen and depraved character of men, but is viewed with abhorrence by all holy beings.

If the *motives* to retaliate injuries are not wise, if the *disposition* with which that work is done, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and dishonourable to God, the *consequences* of it, whether immediate or remote, particular or general, I think I may say, are always bad.

A man strikes me : I strike him in return, and then prosecute and make him pay a hundred dollars. There is retaliation, and what are its consequences? Let us examine them independently of any supposed prohibition, and compare them with the Gospel method of treating an injury.

According to the doctrine of the *lex talionis*, I may and must both strike and prosecute. I must strike to prevent further injury, as well as to chastise, i. e. to let my adversary know how good it feels. "*Silent enim leges inter arma.*" I break no law by striking, but rather obey the law of nature ; "*non scripta, sed nata.*" The particular consequences of an action relate to the actor and other individuals ; the general consequences to society ; the immediate, to the time present or near, the remote to futurity, in its largest sense.

1. The particular consequences of my retaliation, are the most perturbed and impassioned frame of which two beings are capable ; we have fallen on each other with the rage of two devils, and both of us feel at the moment some of the worst passions of hell. It is very supposable that one or both of us may be materially injured, in life or limb ; a case which often occurs. But I will lay no stress on supposition. A paroxysm of rage cannot pass on the human mind without a general deterioration of soul : our noblest powers are prostrated : all our best sensibilities, together with reason itself, are for a moment extinct. The heaviest blame is granted to be due to him who fell first on me : but as I imbibe his spirit and feelings, and act like him, I come in for a share of the shame and guilt.

When the effervescence of passion abates, and perhaps some kind hand has pulled us apart, as they pull off two bulldogs, lest we should kill one another ; I begin to cast about for the best means of more deep and deliberate revenge. I know him to have been the first aggressor, a circumstance which at once releases my conscience from all restraint, and I, burning like a comet for vengeance, assail him in the law, blacken his character what I can, and lay claim to cost and damages. In the mean time we both enter the court as hostile as possible ; and perhaps in our bruised and livid countenances carry a true record of the proceedings of the *lex ta-*

lionis court below, from which we have appealed. The prosecution and defence are carried on with vigour and becoming spirit : besmeared by artful counsel and interested witnesses with many coats of false colouring, and perhaps some *false swearing*. Defamation, slander, falsehood, and perjury, are not unfrequently employed on both sides, but so disguised and shielded by the forms of civil justice, as to defy all power of detection.

The suit issues as it ought, against the first aggressor, but not without loss of money and time, and much expense of morals to us both. However, I have the satisfaction to beat him, and he sustains the mortification of being effectually *cast* in the suit. Having paid off the costs all round, we both return to our business : I with a deep and invincible hatred and contempt for him; and he with not only abhorrence of me, but a fixed determination to be revenged when ever opportunity shall present. Thus we carry enmity to the grave, and a great chance there is, if on some subsequent occasion, the quarrel be not renewed with tenfold violence.

Thus we see the particular consequences of retaliation extending in *remotum*. But,

2. There are general consequences also to be regarded, which are both immediate and remote. My retaliation, as a comment on the doctrine, becomes a precedent. The plaintiff and defendant has each his partizans, and they are often numerous : the affair presently assumes the aspect of a *little civil war*. Great animosity, recrimination, and hostility are visible. These disturbances, in which both parties are brought into court, and there allowed, under certain restrictions, to vent their malice at each other, dignified by the presence and shielded by the arm of justice, are neither more nor less than the nurseries of war. It is indeed but a war of words ; but it presents the strongest incentives to vices of the most atrocious and alarming character.

You, Sir, from your great experience in courts of law, are sensible that in these terrible collisions of passion, pride, and revenge, the oaths on each side are generally counter to each other ; and resentment is carried to the last extreme. The perpetual recurrence of these scenes gives tone to the public mind ; and it follows that society, considered as one great person, one aggregate of character, is strained up in every nerve and fibre to the irritable tension of revenge and animosity. Even children inhale it with their vital breath, and draw it with their mother's milk. "*Non docti, sed imbuti sumus.*"

These passions, embodied and directed in a particular way,

result in war on the large scale; and the doctrine of retaliation, thus fostered and fed, thus honoured and dignified through all ranks of life, becomes the nursery, the storehouse, shall I say becomes the universal pander, of war and bloodshed.

Thus have I traced, though by no means in their worst forms, the consequences of resistance and revenge. I omitted to say, that, in almost every instance, sin against God, and work for bitter, if not too late repentance, enhances the guilt of both parties; and that, when after the conflict is past, they retire to unharness, there is abundant reason for both to bewail their own folly and infatuation. Revenge, Sir, is sweet to the taste, but it is poison to the soul.

Sir, the grand and only counterpoise to all these deplorable consequences of retaliation is, that *an offender has been punished*. But even of this, we may ask Cicero's famous question of Cassius, "*Cui bono fuerit;*" though it was asked on a very different occasion. "*For whose interest was it?*" It will be replied,

1. The law is honoured. But I answer, a disposition is cherished which will ensure ten transgressions in place of one. Besides, what honour is due to a law which Jesus Christ has repealed? It will be answered,

2. An offender is punished. But I answer, is punished by a hand which God has forbidden to meddle with the rod; and the punisher has yet to answer before God for his interference. It will be said,

3. If men were not punished for assault and battery, there would be no living in security. But I answer: This is in the face of fact. For the Church of Christ once tried the experiment; nay, was founded on that principle, and resisted no violence; and during that very period, that Church overspread the Roman empire.

Sir, I humbly trust in God, there is a far better method for treating every species of violence than by resistance and retaliation. I return to the case whose consequences I have been particularly tracing.

A man, either by premeditated malice, or sudden passion, falls upon me and strikes me. To use the words of Christ, If he strike me on the right cheek, sooner than return the blow I am to present the other. Every reader of observation knows what this means. The assault must be received with meekness, without passion, without retaliation. Nor is this so sublime a pinnacle of virtue as to be beyond all comprehension, or human effort. Let me at that moment only reflect on what is certainly true, and I shall feel no tendency

to anger or revenge. Let me imagine myself in the presence and before the awful throne of God, who is that moment observing my conduct, who has suffered that occurrence as a trial of my virtue : let me consider that powerful and beneficent angels are watching me ; perhaps pitying my pains, and ready to exult in my victory over pride and passion : let me imagine that devils, to whom the Christian's faith and fortitude are more hateful than hell itself, are hoping to see me intoxicated with rage and resembling themselves, and perhaps urging the fury and brutality of my assailant :—these views, even without adverting to the prohibitory precept, will check my anger, and rather dispose me to pity and forgiveness.

The emergency of the moment might preclude the necessity or possibility of words : but when the unhappy man, whose tormenting passions have given him far more pain than his blows have inflicted on me, shall have had time to reflect without passion, let me, as opportunity may offer, convince him that I feel no resentment, but heartily forgive him ; let me convince him that I do not cover, beneath an exterior of smiles and sunshine, a heart full of hatred and revenge—in short, let me by a course of conduct open, liberal, and sincere, beneficent, kind, and ingenuous, show him that I can overcome evil with good.

Concerning these two very different modes of treating a violent injury, I ask, Sir, not merely which is most conformable to the laws of Christ, the spirit of the Gospel, and the conduct of the primitive Christians ; because that can be no question with any one who has attentively read the New Testament ; but I ask, which would evince the noblest character, the most exalted understanding, the purest heart, the greatest and most magnanimous soul. Suppose two men to have pursued these two different kinds of conduct, I ask which of them on a death-bed, and near the verge of eternity, would reflect on his conduct with most pleasure, or with the least pain ? Which of these men would be the brightest ornament and blessing to society, would do the most good, prevent the most evil, and be the wisest and ablest counsellor in all public deliberations where the welfare of a state or nation was concerned ? Ah, Sir, which of them would you choose as a companion and associate, were you to begin your life anew ? And I ask once more, should it be your happiness to gain the regions of eternal peace and joy, which of these men do you think it most probable you should have as your immortal companion there ?

The concessions of our laws relative to the numerous and

heavy penalties of the Mosaic code, I have, Sir, to save time, adopted as proofs that those penalties are rescinded. Concerning the practice of taking *life for life*, or putting to death for murder, I have traced it to what is called God's command to Noah, and I hope I have shown satisfactorily, that it was precisely the *jus naturale talionis*, which was as early known as crimes themselves : for surely there needs no more inspiration, nor no higher, to know how to revenge than how to perpetrate a crime. I have shown that that general law of retaliation of injuries was fully admitted, and established by God himself as a rule of civil justice, for two reasons :

1. Because God has a right to inflict justice on an offender, and to punish crimes by whatever hand he pleases ; for when a man falls a prey to his own passions, and vices ; or when even the accursed spirits torment each other, their sufferings are just. And,

2. God saw fit to establish the *lex talionis*, as a mean of punishing the bloody and revengeful passions of men ; for in its general operation both parties suffer, though sometimes in different ways and in unequal degrees ; at other times they suffer alike, especially when this law is carried into national wars.

I have, I trust, shown, that this entire law of retaliation, as being a dictate of a selfish, depraved, and cruel nature, is expressly, and in so many words, repealed by Christ, who commanded his disciples, *not to resist evil* with violence, nor *repel injury by injury*. And I have shown that the apostolic Church acted universally on the principle of non-resistance, and were harmless and pacific in all their intercourse with men, and that this very principle so nobly and fully displayed, was the mark of distinction by which they were known, and which above all other things enforced the truth of their doctrines. It now remains to consider the operation of Christian principles in relation to the system of war, and the general weal of society.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Impolicy and ill effects of capital punishments.

SIR,

THE havoc and destruction our race have, in all ages, made of each other, will be to their eternal disgrace and hu-

miliation. I have dwelt, and dwelt long, on those cases of taking away the life of our fellow-creatures, which are generally esteemed of the most pressing and imperious necessity. I humbly trust I have shown that there is no warrant for that practice, from the word of God. The rendering like for like, hurt for hurt, evil for evil, and blood for blood, a practice perfectly consonant to the most corrupt and malicious heart, and most dear to the vilest and basest of men, was, in the ancient ages of darkness, admitted, and established, by the Creator, rather as a punishment of human cruelty and atrocity. This God himself declares in the passage of the prophet above cited, "*I gave them statutes which were not good, and judgments by which they should not live.*" These sanguinary laws were adapted to a period of the world, in which men had little knowledge of God, and still less of futurity.

But when the Sun of righteousness arose, when life and immortality were fully brought to light in the Gospel, a new era opened on mankind. Our fault is, that we swell the importance of concerns, merely temporal, to an unmeasured size, and diminish those of eternity in the same proportion. The light which the Gospel opens on the mind, claims the right of holding an entire and absolute controul over human affairs. How often do we hear it asserted from the sacred desk, that the salvation of one immortal soul, is an object of far greater importance, than all the temporal concerns of all the kingdoms in the world, during all the ages of time. Nor did I ever hear this assertion condemned as false or extravagant. It is a matter of mathematical certainty, that one soul shall enjoy a greater quantity, if I may so speak, of happiness, or endure a greater portion of misery, than the amount of happiness or misery yet experienced by the whole human race. Any certain degree of happiness or misery continued, and made absolutely eternal, will at length surpass, in quantity and importance, any given amount of happiness or misery. To show how this may be ascertained, let it be supposed that there have lived already one million of millions of human beings; which is probably ten times more than the real number. Let us suppose that they lived on an average 30 years a piece; which is far too large a calculation. The consequence will be, that one man who shall be happy or miserable 30 millions of millions of years, will have enjoyed or suffered more than all the human race have yet enjoyed or suffered.

Indeed, Sir, since I am on this speculation, and am sensible that I address a mind that is no stranger to the powers and

correctness of calculation, suffer me to suppose, that the number of years which all Adam's race shall have existed, even at the day of judgment, admitting that to be at the distance of a thousand years, can be computed; and we can easily perceive, that one immortal soul shall overpass that period, and even double it a thousand and a thousand times, and still have an eternity before him.

How important, then, is the destiny of one soul; and how do all concerns which are merely temporal, diminish before it! Let not these speculations be waved under the charge of *metaphysical*. They lie in the great lines of truth, and present before us a glimpse of our prospects.

Every Christian believes, that when a wicked man dies, he goes into a state of eternal misery. His probation closes; there is no more hope of his repentance, reformation, pardon, or redemption. Who, then, can wish for the death of a wicked man? Who can rashly lay his hand on that brittle thread of life, which suspends a wretched soul over the dreadful gulph, and bid him drop? What temporal advantage the poor criminal may gain by living, or lose by dying, is nothing. What temporal good a community may gain or lose by the event, are like poisoning a feather against mountains of lead. While the ulterior intentions of the Almighty God respecting a soul, are unknown to us, while we perceive no hope from its present state, and that the stroke of death will be his eternal separation from all good; where is our mercy, our compassion, our benevolence, when we bid that soul plunge into endless perdition?

But, alas! Man is the slave of passion, prejudice, and folly. Having begun to tamper with a jewel of such inestimable value as life, having no notion of the value or destinies of the immortal part, he dashes with careless hand a fellow-creature from life, and plunges him into hell; nay, he wantonly throws away his own life, and rushes into the presence of his eternal Judge, long before, in the course of nature, he would have been called.

But I return from this digression, into which the ardour of my feelings has borne me, in pleading that souls, whose period of preparation for eternity is at most but short, may not be hurried from life by those who have no interest in their destruction, and no right to assume the rod of divine vengeance; lest they meet them again, never to part, in the regions of misery, where they can no more deal mutual destruction.

No arguments, Sir, can be necessary to prove the inutility

of that which God has expressly forbidden. I might, therefore, content myself with having shown, that God has forbidden the retaliation of injuries in all cases, but especially in the case of taking *life for life*. Indeed, did not the blindness of Christians amount to infatuation, and was it not as wilful as it is total, they would perceive in the command of Christ, *to love our enemies*, a full and absolute prohibition to take their lives, which is the greatest possible injury we can do them. The very pretence, that we "love them that hate us," and "do good to them that despitefully use us," while at the same moment, we hang them up by the neck, till they are dead, dead, dead, or meet them in the field of battle, and cut them to pieces if we can, and plunder and burn their cities, and do them all the injury the malice of war can invent, is the most barefaced and impudent of all pretences. What if Jesus Christ had loved his enemies after that sort?—had wished them well, indeed, and professed a very high and refined benevolence, but in the mean time, had called twelve legions of angels to his aid, and sent his ungrateful enemies all to perdition, wishing, as we pretend to, that they might repent and go to heaven, from amidst the flaming bolts which he hurled, and by which they perished? As for us, while we are dashing our enemies to pieces with cannon balls, we pretend to whine and simper about their salvation. It is mockery!!

Many persons, however, seem willing enough to adopt the plan of *mercy* and *peace*: but then the difficulty is, how shall we be able to proceed in a civil State, without sometimes taking life? They appear, after all, to think civil government can no more proceed, without some human sacrifices, than Agamemnon's fleet could quit the shores of Troy.

"Sanguine querendi reditus, animaque litandum."

In the progress of legislation, the distant extremes of severity and mildness, have been, at times, approached by different legislators. Draco, the severest of the Greeks, a celebrated Athenian legislator, flourished about 640 years before Christ. His laws were so sanguinary, that they were said to be written in blood. He punished every crime with death; a practice agreeable to the stoic philosophy, which esteemed every crime equally culpable. The Roman laws of the twelve tables, in point of severity, were not far from the Mosaic code. The famous Catharine II. of Russia, abolished capital punishment throughout her dominions, during her reign; and, notwithstanding her failings, in some essential points, the mildness

of her administration, and the prosperity of her empire, comprehending a seventh part of the solid land of the globe, will never cease to be celebrated in history.

The English laws are justly censurable, for the number of the offences they make capital. They evince a cruelty of character, a prodigality of life, inconsistent with the politeness, refinement, integrity, and humanity of that nation. To deprive a man of life for a paltry theft, borders on the cruel extreme of Draco, and justifies the reproach sometimes cast on English jurisprudence, that in that country, "a man may as well steal the horse as his bridle."

It has been doubted whether capital punishments tend to diminish the number of crimes: and some, of consequence, have endeavoured to show, from actual observation and comparison, that among those nations, the most mild in their punishments, there are the fewest capital crimes. The smallness of the number of capital crimes, however, seems rather to depend on the smallness of the number of profligate and abandoned characters in a country.

These, Sir, are conjectures, but one thing is certain: *there is no necessity of capital punishment, on any ground whatever.* The very few persons executed for capital crimes, amounts to no perceptible diminution of the profligate and abandoned. Considered in the light of mere depletion, it is like taking a drop of blood from a feverish body. If those persons, whose crimes are such as to render their liberty dangerous to society, were placed in perpetual confinement, and put into a regular and moderate course of labour, they might still render some benefit to society, and enjoy a season for reflection and reformation, which would often result in the happiest effects.

The present public penitentiaries, with little trouble, might embrace this benevolent object, and afford a time and place for many an unhappy wretch to become an amiable and virtuous man. Even though the event of reformation might not be generally esteemed probable; yet at least, in some instances, it would prove so. The policy, and shall I say humanity, of our own government, has already established various prisons, where men are confined for life: and it is greatly to the honour of this nation, that many crimes, once capital in this country, are now punished by confinement.

Why, Sir, may not this enlightened and benevolent, this humane and merciful policy, be carried a little further? It may be of infinite importance to some of our fellow-men, who are no more deserving of death, than, perhaps, some of the very court

who sink the criminal to the grave. It will save the public presence from being polluted by the horrid spectacle of legalized slaughter. It will save our children from beholding the horrible scene of one man laying his hand deliberately on another, and taking away his life : it will save an innocent family from the agonies and the infamy, of seeing the blood of a father shed by the hand of the executioner.

The eloquent and amiable Tully, whose sentiments I have quoted on other occasions, uses on this very topic, language worthy of a Christian magistrate. " Quid enim, ait, optari potest, quod ego mallet, quam me in consulatu mee, carnificem de foro, crucem de campo sustulisse ! Sed ista laus primum est majorem nostrorum, Quiritis, qui expulsis regibus, nullum in libero populo vestigium crudelitatis regie retinuerunt." Though I am fully aware, Sir, that you need no interpreter, yet I cannot forbear the pleasure of echoing these generous sentiments in my own language. " For what," says that noble heathen, " can be desired, which I would rather accomplish, than that I in my consulate, should have taken away the executioner from the forum ; the cross from the Campus Martius. But that praise is due to our ancestors," &c.

He says, in the same connexion, " I forbid the assembly of the Roman people, to be polluted by the contagion of an executioner." Not only the Hebrews, but many of the ancient nations, held that the touch of a dead body was polluting. By a peculiar delicacy and force of thought, that pollution is here transferred to the sight, and even to the sight of an executioner. The thought, Sir, is horrible, and shocking to the moral sense which the God of nature has given us, that one man should, under any circumstances whatever, destroy the life of another. Even the shedding of the blood of beasts is revolting, and, if I mistake not, the laws of England, though they make so free with human life, do not allow a butcher to hold the office of a civil judge. Yet it cannot be concealed, that in that highly enlightened and civilized country, as well as in our own, many a human butcher is exalted not only to the bench of justice, but to other offices of more importance.

I am, Sir, &c.

LETTER IX.

The right of taking life not vested in society.

SIR,

I have endeavoured to show that there is nothing like a divine warrant for taking life, or inflicting capital punish-

ment; that the natural law of retaliation is expressly and wholly repealed by the Gospel; that the light which divine truth has opened on the destinies of the soul, clearly shows that the probation of an immortal being, cannot without guilt, be closed by the voluntary act of any man or body of men. Nor is there any apparent necessity from any known principle of sound policy, considered merely in a civil point of view, for inflicting capital punishment.

Suffer me, Sir, now to observe, nor is the observation new, that as a man has no right, on any account whatever, to destroy his own life, so he can have no power to delegate that right to others: therefore, governments, founded in the social compact, can claim no right to take life, because no such power was delegated or thrown into the common stock at first. In organizing what may be called a free government, we surrender or throw into a common stock a part of our rights and liberties, that we may the more effectually be secured in the rest. But no man can surrender or delegate to another a right which he does not possess; therefore, no man can grant to others the right of taking his life. This right must be derived from a higher source than any stock or aggregate of rights delegated by the social compact.

This point, I believe, is fully conceded by the ablest civilians and moral writers: hence judge Blackstone remarks, Com. B. IV. c. 1, s. 2: "It is clear that the right of punishing crimes against the law of nature, (*Jus naturale talionis*,) as murder and the like, is in a state of nature, vested in every individual." Here then it is assumed, by the ablest writer on the principles of law and jurisprudence, that God has placed a right to retaliate all injuries, *like for like*, in the hands of every man. On this ground, he rests the right of punishing some crimes with death.

But this ground, Sir, fails beneath his feet in two important and essential respects.

I. His mode of getting this right out of the hand of every body, and transferring it to what he dignifies by the name of "society." I have already considered the nature of this right: that, although the culprit for what he has done against society, deserves to feel the effects of the *lex talionis*, as far as those effects inflict temporal pains and privations; yet society can have no motive to cut short the sinner's probation, and consign him to eternal misery; nor does his crime against society deserve an endless retribution of pain. I have shown also, what cannot be questioned, that the general motive to retaliation is unwise, the disposition by which it is inflicted

generally if not always wrong, and the consequences always bad, when compared with the Christian method of treating injuries; and that therefore this sanguinary law of corrupt nature was admitted by the Supreme Ruler as a general scourge for the revengeful and bloody passions of men.

But our present object is to see how this immediate and universal right to revenge or retaliate, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and *life for life*, was transferred from individuals, to "Society." But judge Blackstone takes no pains here. He only says "it was transferred."

With one easy dash of the pen, this great civilian recognizes all the forms of government ever known, as legal organs of justice, clothed with the power of cutting off human beings *ad libitum*. Sir, I doubt, when God shall make inquisition for blood, whether things on this broad scale will so easily pass. I am sure they will not. The career of nations and governments, in this dreadful work, will undergo the scrutiny of eternal wisdom and justice, and I believe will appear black with the incessant crime of cruelty and murder.

What is "Society" in the sense of this writer? The ancient despotic monarchies were generally founded in violence, murder, and usurpation. If we begin with Babylon and Egypt, if we run back to Nimrod and Misraim, the sacred Scriptures throw sufficient light on those institutions for our present purpose. If a man can cut his way to a throne through opposing millions; if rivers of blood shall waft him to empire; if, when seated on the pinnacle of the structure which he has reared, like Khouli Khan, with the skulls of victims; he there assumes the right of disposing of the life and property of all the survivors, whom his power has subdued or his treachery beguiled: if his arbitrary will be the only rule of justice, or where that fails to extend, through defect of ubiquity, the will of some subordinate slave takes the place of his will, and deals life or death, chains or liberty, at pleasure,—is that "Society?" is the power of taking life transferred from individuals and given to that one arbitrary bloody usurper? A small society indeed!

Is there such a charm in the word *government*—something so sacred in the name of *King* or *Emperor*, that the moment the vilest miscreant on earth, by the most atrocious means which men or devils can devise, assumes to himself that title, and begins to act the tyrant, his murders are to be glossed over by the easy and dignified mode of calling them acts of "society?" I presume not.

Sir, the murders of a royal or imperial villain, who has

raised himself to a condition to exact those titles, can never be bleached into the whiteness of innocence. The rains and sun-shine of heaven can never purify that ground which is stained by the blood of murdered millions. The wretch who is unsuccessful, and falls into ruin and execration, from the middle of the ascent, like a Cataline or Robespierre, is but half as guilty as the villain who gains the summit, and there remains, till the horrid blackness of his vices is obscured by the effulgence of royal grandeur, like Cæsar or Bonaparte.

If I am now in possession of my neighbour's house and goods and tenements, which I took from him when I murdered him thirty years ago, is my claim strengthened by possession, or my guilt lessened by time? "Can one be pardoned, and retain the offence?" Or will the dignity and grace with which I enjoy my plunder, stop the ascending cry of blood, or close the ear of justice on high? Ah! Sir, we are dazzled by the poor and sickly glare of earthly power and wealth, and forget that pure, eternal unchanging light and justice, before which all iniquity for ever stands uncovered.

I have dwelt on this point to show the monstrous absurdity of supposing it possible, that a bloody usurper can have acquired, even any right, to govern, much less to take away the lives of men. To deny this will be to affirm, that any man on earth, by whatever measure of guilt and atrocity he can obtain power over men, has a full, and even a divine right, to govern them and become the dispenser of life and death.

But, Sir, setting aside the amazing unfitness of the supposition, the shocking appearance of the principle considered in *thesi*, what evidence have we of the fact, that when kingdoms and empires arose, the right* of taking *life for life* departed from every individual, and devolved upon "Society?" i. e. upon *one individual man*, who, generally speaking, had destroyed one great portion of men, that he might establish an absolute arbitrary despotism over the other? I certainly shall not be contradicted when I assert, that most of the despotic rulers of the ancient nations, were, in their own persons, incomparably the greatest criminals in their respective empires. Yet, while they promiscuously shed blood like water, both at home and abroad; while they practised every vice that debases man, and that on the most enormous scale, they affected great severity against a man who had committed a solitary crime, which did not happen to gratify their pride or lust.

* I speak of the *right*, not the *fact*.

The language of God to Samuel, when the house of Israel had impiously demanded to have a king like other nations, shows us in what light the kings of the earth were viewed, not by men, but by God himself. God ordered Samuel, to tell them what the manner of their king should be; and whoever will give himself the trouble of turning to that portrait, will perceive the picture of an arbitrary tyrant.

I shall not dwell on this subject. Those ages have passed away, and both kings and people have long since received the retributions of infinite wisdom and justice. But this subject will scarce bear examination: the result of an impartial scrutiny must run counter to the general current of prejudice, which has, generally, left the ancient, and indeed all other monarchies and forms of government, in quiet possession of all the powers which they claimed to exercise over men, and in fact ratified them as derived from divine authority.

The only thing which can be claimed and vindicated for those ancient despotisms, which were generally, though not always, reared and ruled by the very worst of men, is, that when in the exercise of their usurped authority, they punished men for their crimes;—*a just desert was inflicted* on the guilty, as if they had been destroyed by serpents or wild beasts of the forest, or even by their own hands. Nothing more can be said. To talk of any transfer of power to punish, from an individual to “Society,” sounds fine and looks fair in theory, but is absurd, is false. Instead of a transfer of power from one to many, as the phrase *Society* seems to import, it was in fact, a transfer of power from many to *one*. For in the sovereign was vested all power, legislative, judicial, and executive.

There was one government in ancient times, founded, organized, and for many ages supported by divine authority. The Hebrew government, it will be admitted, held the right of taking life: but under circumstances and limitations so peculiar, so strict and definite, and altogether so extraordinary, that there is little room to infer from that to other nations, or the reverse. God was their King, Lawgiver, and Judge. They had no power to legislate: even their municipal and fiscal regulations were given them complete: their modes of trial and punishment, from which they were not at liberty to vary, were prescribed. One all-pervading power and authority filled out their system, even to its minutest ramifications, and, till the time of their captivity, the She-

kinah, or divine presence and glory resided in their temple, and was their oracle.

For myself, Sir. I see very little even here which looks like a transfer of the power of life and death, from individuals to "Society." Admitting, however, the expression to convey a correct idea, in relation to the Hebrew state, and as it regards other nations, it must be admitted, that retaliation and punishment gradually receded from the hands of individuals; into what hands it fell, we have already seen. But,

2. We have already shown, in whatever hands it might have been, and however much or little the ancient usurpations and tyrannies were recognized by God as legal governments, that the right of retaliation of injuries was abolished and done away by the express authority of Christ. "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." How this precept can be so expounded as to admit the resistance of evil, not only in *one*, but in every form, I am unable to conceive.

The general error of writers on government seems to be this; they, in the first place, appear to think it necessary to admit and maintain, that civil government is a divine institution; then, out of this doctrine they spin and weave a consecrated garment, in which they dress up every form of government both ancient and modern. Thus robed in state, and decorated with religion, these awful forms, sometimes indeed the noblest and most stupendous structures of human wisdom, but far oftener the most frightful monuments of human pride, folly, and ambition, claim the veneration and obedience of men. "For," say they, "the powers that be are ordained of God, and he that *resisteth* the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

Who did Paul mean by the powers that be? Nero; that monster of cruelty, who murdered his own mother, most of the great men in Rome, and at last Paul himself: who set Rome on fire, in order that he might see how Troy looked when it was burning?

The apostle Paul in this passage has no other object, than to establish the precise doctrine I am endeavouring to establish, viz. the Christian doctrine of *non-resistance*.

Paul, in viewing the great potentates of the earth, perceived the hand of God in their elevation, whether they were benefactors, or robbers and murderers of mankind. Thus in his sense Pharaoh, Alexander, Cæsar, and Mahomet, were ordained of God. But to dethrone and destroy Nero was not the work of Christians; there sphere was righteousness

and peace. "For," said our Saviour, "my kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER X.

The practice of taking life perpetuated by prejudice and passion.

SIR,

LET me not be understood to undervalue the excellence, or detract from the utility, of civil government. It surely is as much preferable to anarchy, as the arts and sciences are to savage rudeness and indigence. But those who so ingeniously attempt to insphere it in divine radiance and glory, do but obscure it in a halo of mist and gloomy vapours. As the sons of Adam were originally free and equal, so they were rude and unacquainted with the arts and sciences. How far the benevolent Creator might have aided them in the attainment of useful knowledge, we cannot tell; but the science of government probably rose with other sciences, and rests on the same foundation. That it was suggested "by the wants and weaknesses of mankind," there is little doubt; but what sort of *wants* and *weaknesses* those were, which first suggested the thought of extensive combination, is somewhat questionable. I suspect they had something to do with vengeance, victory, conquest, and dominion. For a great family of people living in scattered settlements, and employed in agriculture, would not be very likely to embody or assemble, unless for defence or invasion. The chief father or patriarch would naturally be the first leader, till supplanted by some usurper.

Exclusive of the Hebrew or divine government, the sum of ancient and earthly dominions, or the four great monarchies, are represented, in sacred writ, by two orders of symbols, which give no favourable idea of their origin, character, or termination. They are first represented by the prophet Daniel under the form of a mighty image, composed of various materials. The Assyrian empire was the head of gold, the Persian was silver, the Grecian brass, the Roman iron, and in the end iron and clay. The prophet saw till a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, which stone

smote the image upon its feet. Then the gold, the silver, the brass, the iron and clay, became as chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind drove them away.

In another vision, the same prophet saw the same potentates represented by wild beasts, a lion, a leopard, a bear, and a monster of indescribable terror and fierceness. These great powers were the abhorrence of God and the scourge of men, while they lasted: they rose like a monster out of a stormy sea agitated by tempests: their course was marked by an exterior of splendour and pomp, and by a vast and perpetual scene of human misery, oppression, and wickedness.

Theorists, in discussing the origin of governments, fall into curious and splendid reveries, substituting the blossoms of fancy which expand in the pleasant fields of imagination, for the realities of truth; and even the pious Christian is amused with the noise and commotion of great wars and revolutions, which come softened to his ear through the long vale of ages, while his eye is pleased with the lustre of heroes and conquerors, cleared, by the pen of the partial historian, from the stain of blood and the blackness of guilt. But the gospel sheds a different light on these subjects; or rather divests them of all their charms, and throws them into darkness, covered with shame and contempt.

Why does a man grow serious and feel alarmed, as he approaches the hour of death and the borders of eternity? It is because the gospel, directing the convictions of his own conscience, sets before him concerns of infinitely greater importance than any thing of a temporal nature. His ambition is in a moment chilled, and he seems suddenly loosened from the powerful spell which passion, prejudice, the popular current, and the bustle of life, have held over him. I have taken some pains to show that we are not bound by any law, divine or human, or by any necessity of interest or circumstances, to take the lives of our fellow-creatures—of our brethren. And those topics of defence are confidently resorted to when the practice of taking life is called in question. But, Sir, that practice or custom depends upon, and is supported by far more *stubborn reasons* than any of the preceding, which I have endeavoured to answer; reasons on which I look with greater timidity and discouragement, and far less hope of their being removed, till the blessed and only potentate shall come to vindicate his Church, not from her professed enemies, but from her friends, who have long vindicated her with weapons and a warfare he never authorized, but forbid, and abhors.

The practice of taking life, Sir, is supported by the mighty torrent of opinion, prejudice, passion, and example, which carries all before it. Let any man who is ever so strenuous to destroy the murderer out of hand, to shed his blood for the blood he has shed, be suddenly informed that all the great powers of Europe had abolished capital punishment; let him also know that our own government had fully adopted the same principle; that the whole current of opinion through Christendom was changed, and already running strong the other way, and that henceforth it would be considered as a blot and disgrace upon any nation that should punish capital-ly; what do you think, Sir, would be the effect? He would soon begin to find his opinions waver. He would perhaps open his eyes upon the Gospel, upon the system of righteousness and peace, of love and mercy;—on those fair and sacred pages he would see no blood, but that of the Lamb of God shed for sin, and that of the saints shed for the witness of Jesus. We have daily and astonishing proofs of the overwhelming force of the tide of popular opinion; and the arguments by which it is supported serve as convenient topics of declamation; an armour resorted to when any one resists the current: but which armour would be dropped without a struggle—without an effort—without regret, should the current by any means change; or rather, with acknowledged regret that it had been so long pertinaciously held.

Sir, we have abundant proofs at all times, how much prejudice has, and how little sound reason and conscience have to do, in the extreme and universal thirst for the blood of a murderer, and in the vulgar supposition that all the powers, and laws, and sympathies of nature, operate for his detection and condign suffering: how groans and sobs are heard—lights, apparitions, spectres, and goblins, are seen, where the horrid crime has been perpetrated and concealed, till the murder is brought to light. I plead not for murder; I hope to be able to evince to every one's satisfaction that I view it with sufficient horror.

But, Sir, a man shall commit murder, before the sun, in the presence of *honourable* witnesses; shall avow it in public, even in the midst of our own Christian people, so punctilious of justice: shall, to adopt the common hyperbole of expression, parade our streets, brandishing his blood stained weapons, and menacing a second victim, in any one who shall assail his honour; that is to say, perhaps, who shall speak with too much freedom of his lies and villanies. But, behold! justice sleeps; no public sentiment is roused; no preterna-

tural groans or sobs are heard—no direful spectres are seen; no sagacious populace scents the “rank offence” in the tainted gale. All the sympathies of nature, under the narcotic power of some unknown charm, still slumber; even the very ghost of the murdered man never so much as once appears to demand justice.

By and by, this murderer is seen busily employed in making laws for his country; or, perhaps on the solemn bench of justice, deciding with reverend and awful mein on the life and property of his fellow-citizens. I take not this method to reproach those unhappy men, who may have fallen into this horrid crime; nor yet to reproach the lenity of my country, which has not brought them to justice. These men may be truly penitent; and may have reason to adore God that their country was lenient;—I hope in God’s mercy and goodness they are forgiven; and from my soul I forgive them;—but I state this to show that all this noise about the abhorrence of murder is a solemn farce. It has no foundation but in the brain, sick and delirious with prejudice, and public passion.

Thousands and thousands of murders are sanctioned by public law, and celebrated with public applause, where one is thus abhorred. Even admitting defensive war to be right, and fully authorized by God himself, still, to make the best of it, all who fall on *one side* are certainly murdered. And again; admitting fully the equity of defensive war, nevertheless the *mere pretence* of defensive war, cannot shield from guilt—neither can the plea of a mistake afford any justification. If I should way-lay my neighbour and shoot him from behind a wall, and set up my plea that I verily thought he was coming to kill me, few courts, I believe, would pronounce my plea sufficient.

But, Sir, such is the depravity and blindness of men, that a nation may do any thing, and nobody be esteemed guilty. The extreme infatuation of men has brought it to pass, that when a man has set his name to a paper called a *declaration of war*, the business of killing on both sides, is immediately sanctioned; and hundreds of thousands may fall, and all the terrible panic about murder is done away: the strife is glorious and honourable.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

Nations have no right to wage war.

SIR,

UNDER the sanction of a Divine command given to the ancient Hebrew state, but repealed by Jesus Christ, as some believe, Christians continue to punish with death. Though I am persuaded that this practice, which is, in fact, the basis of war on the broad scale, owes its continuance far more to the force of custom and example than to a consciousness of a duty imposed by divine authority. In so much, that were the legislature of any state or kingdom, from their own peculiar views, induced to abolish capital punishment, no Christian who has knowledge of the gospel precepts, would feel much alarm, whatever he might think of the policy of the measure.

The Roman orator, as already noticed, considered that public executions, the sight of the shocking and debasing apparatus of death, and the still more shocking and inhuman appearance of the horrid infliction, would defile and disgrace the Roman people. He drew his motives, however, from the feelings of humanity and from the pride of republican freedom. Could his imagination have followed the soul of the wretched sufferer into endless darkness and misery; could he have perceived the stroke of death to be but the commencement of the torments of hell, with how much more force might he have plead for the unhappy wretch to be continued in this world of hope and probation; at least, till the hand of Divine Justice, unaided by human agency, should close the catastrophe.

Death legalized by the sanction of the law, and by the presence of the authorities of a country both temporal and spiritual, and deliberately inflicted before the people, diminishes the dignity, the security, the inviolableness;—nay, lowers the estimation of human life, breaks down its sacred enclosures, and teaches men how to trifle with the probation and eternal destiny of each other.

It has been already observed, that murder is *offensive* war; the infliction of death on the murderer is *defensive*. If it be evident that under the gospel, the sanguinary penalties of the Jewish law are repealed, and that God does not require capital punishment, then the grand argument in favour of war, that it is necessary because commanded by God, is answered.

H

For if war be not necessary, in this particular and private sense of the phrase, then surely it cannot be necessary, in reference to any divine command, between one nation and another. To this important branch of this inquiry, Sir, I now beg leave to draw your attention.

But here, there will scarce be room to dwell a moment. For however the question of capital punishment, in a few extreme cases, might be settled, whether for or against it, it is presumed that all national wars are placed, even by those who vindicate them, on the footing of right and expediency which a nation is at full liberty to discuss, and then to make war or not, as she may think best. In the Hebrew history alone it is that we find any nation commanded by God to make war: but in their case the command was explicit, and the object definite; as were the promises of God to the Patriarchs, and the commissions of Moses and Joshua.

The right of a nation, however, to make war, must, in the mode of discussion I have adopted, be resolved into one of two distinct grounds: either, *first*, because God commands it, as he commanded Joshua to invade Canaan; in which case there is no option, as there was none to Joshua: or, *secondly*, because a state of things has arisen, in which God has left it to the discretion of a nation to make war or not, as they may see fit. Let us consider these grounds.

1. Were it not well known to what shifts and subterfuges men will resort in support of a favourite hypothesis, it would seem improbable that any advocate of war would go so far as to plead a divine command. Yet in the vindication of popular measures, where the current of opinion runs strong, and men's minds are heated, no assertion is too bold, no ground too narrow or too sandy, no argument too absurd.

Every argument which I have adduced against the infliction of capital punishment, applies here with peculiar force. The wars of the Hebrew state, so often alluded to as our warrant and example, were prosecuted under a special and divine command, of which modern wars have no parallel. It surely will not be contended that God has commanded or sanctioned any modern wars, as he did those of Moses, Joshua, the judges and kings of Israel and Judah, by an immediate vision or oracle, or by any other express token of his authority.

The whole argument, in short, is, that as God once commanded to *take life*, and *make war*, so he now commands the same. Every Christian should remember, that we live under a different dispensation, and different laws. There is not a command to take life or to go to war in the whole Gospel;

but there is what amounts to an entire prohibition of both. To the candid observer, nothing can be more evident, than that all the great features of the Hebrew government and Mosaic dispensation, were limited and peculiar to that nation. To Abraham the grand discriminating mark was given, and the institution, or rather grand body of institutions, were completed by Moses.

That the sanguinary laws of that dispensation are generally repealed, the concession of the whole Christian world is sufficient proof for my present purpose. God commanded Moses to punish idolatry, blasphemy, the abuse of parents, breach of sabbath, adultery, and many other crimes, with death. But our legislators consider themselves as released from the *capital* rigour of those commands. So God commanded the Hebrews to invade and conquer Canaan. So he commanded David and others to make war. The most which can be inferred by the advocates of war, from all this, is, that as God once approved of war, so he must now. They interpret his ancient commands into a general permission.

When the seepre departed from Judah, and Shiloh came, a new kingdom was established, which in every part of scripture is called *a kingdom of peace*: and of this kingdom every Christian is a subject and a member. Now, Sir, I ask, though God in the former dispensation commanded wars, yet if the Gospel kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; if Christ be the Prince of peace: if He declared his kingdom not of this world, and therefore alleged that his servants would not fight: if the grand law of his kingdom be love *to enemies* as well as friends: if every Christian be a son of peace; what does all this mean? Does it mean that the ancient command to fight, is now to be regarded as a perpetual and universal law of war? Does it mean that Christians shall be fighting, revengeful, bloody creatures? Does all this about the Gospel, the kingdom, the Prince, the sons of peace, mean nothing? Ah! surely nothing, according to the popular mode of expounding scripture. Christians are to fight and devour; Christian nations are to be prompt to avenge every injury with the sword; every Christian is to be "a soldier, sudden and quick in quarrel." And according to a late writer,* who published five sermons in defence of war, 'The magnitude of the offence is of little consequence, between one nation and another, since the smaller the offence persisted in, the greater is the evidence of turpitude; and the more just the cause.'

* Dr. M^r Leod's Five Sermons.

The writer, probably supposing himself borne up by the tide of popular opinion, in favour of an existing war, takes ground which, even in the martial reign and unenlightened age of David, would have classed him with the most depraved of men. The sacred desk, erected for dispensing the Gospel of peace, and the holy sabbath, were polluted with such sentiments as Machiavel could hardly have uttered without a blush and thrill of conscience.—But,

2. That there is now no immediate command for war, but that Christian nations are left to their own discretion, to make war whenever they see just provocation, is the ground of defence commonly taken. This principle throws open the door of war, and like that of the temple of Janus, suffers it seldom to be shut.

I shall briefly remark here, that this was by no means the ground on which the Hebrew wars were waged. They did indeed, sometimes make war without the command of God; but generally by express command, nor do I at present recollect an instance in which they did it merely in the exercise of discretionary power. Their wars on the seven nations of Canaan, on the Amalekites, on Moab and Ammon, on Syria, on the Philistines, were all commanded by God, which command was signified in a manner, to which modern nations have no parallel.

Prohibitory laws, form what some moral writers have termed perfect obligations; but injunctions or affirmative commands, unless they relate to single and specific actions, lay the foundation of imperfect obligations. The ancient wars of the Hebrews are not vindicable on the general principle of a discretionary power to make war. For although the *lex talionis*, or law of revenge, is recognized in them, yet they were either immediately commanded from time to time, or the provocation and causes so exactly described, as to leave nothing at the discretion of the Hebrew government. How far is this from being the case with modern wars!

Whether war be considered as vindictive, or precautionary, so doubtful are its issues, so terrible its calamities, so extreme and extensive its miseries, that were the *lex talionis* admitted to be still in force, it never could be considered as resting on a mere general permission; or suspended on a power left entirely at the discretion of one, ten, an hundred, or a thousand men, or of a whole nation. As infinite knowledge and power, can alone foresee and control the events of war, the very supposition, that God had placed it at the option and discretion of a man, or at most, of a few men, would be a reflect-

tion upon his wisdom and goodness. It would in effect, be like placing a sharp and dangerous instrument in the hands of an infant, unable to use it without as much peril to itself as to others.

The rage which mankind feel against a single private murderer, and their keen and indefatigable pursuit of justice, is perfectly irreconcilable with their total indifference to life in case of war. When the life of the most worthless member of society is to be taken away, who has not noticed the solemn accuracy with which every article of evidence is weighed; the anxiety evinced, and the pains taken to come exactly at the truth; the fair and ample opportunity allowed him to do all he can for his own vindication, and after all, the seeming reluctance and regret with which he is given up to justice, when all his resources fail to screen him?

How much to the honour of our race would it be, if all this seeming humanity and tenderness for our fellow-creatures, were not blotted out with cruelty, and drowned in a sea of blood, the moment the signal of war is given. Then all the pretended regard for life, shown on occasions in comparison infinitely trifling, are shown to be false and hollow. And what is still more shocking, this practice implicates the divine Governor himself, as chargeable with the same enormous inconsistency. For they seem to imagine, when a criminal is tried before a court of justice for his life, that God is present; that great and solemn caution is needful, lest any lightness, injustice, or undue rigour should be used; lest by some prejudice, haste, incaution, or passion, the stain of innocent blood should be incurred. Wherefore, the whole progress is guarded by oaths, and rendered safe and solemn by forms, counsellors, judges, and all the appendages of justice. But in case of war, where the lives of several hundred thousands of men are to fall a sacrifice, whole nations are to suffer, and perhaps whole districts, provinces, and cities to be destroyed by fire and sword, they appear to imagine that God gives up all concern about the value of life, or the immutable and eternal rules of justice; that the God of the universe only waits to see a paper signed, called a declaration of war; no matter how frivolous or how false, how wide of expressing the true motive of the war, or how inadequate that motive if truly stated: or in fact, if there be no declaration, that he only waits to see the first stroke struck, when all its future dreadful and interminable consequences are ratified, all individual responsibility taken off; there is no longer any such thing as violence, injustice, robbery, murder, or cruelty, in the private and proper sense

of those terms. They view it altogether sufficient to say, that *it is war*.

— “*Dolus, an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?
Arma dabunt ipsi.*”

Thus it is vainly imagined, that by one act of a magistrate, perhaps himself one of the basest of men, all the limits, both of mercy and justice, are broken down and abolished; and the all-seeing God is induced to sanction and approbate every outrage which human depravity can perpetrate: nay, the divine blessing and smiles are confidently relied on, on both sides of this horrid fray of human passion and malice.

How dreadful, how fatal, will appear the mistake of these infatuated and infuriated men, when the light of eternity shall show them that the sacred and eternal barriers of divine justice, can never be moved by the vain, idle forms, invented as a cloak for wickedness! When it shall appear, that the eye of God is equally on every human life; that every soldier in the ranks of an army, is born to destinies as high and arduous as the general, the magistrate, or the prince; that the life and rights of every inhabitant of an invaded province, whatever the laws of war, or the proclamation of some licensed murderer and plunderer may say to the contrary, are as truly guaranteed and made inviolable in the sight of God, as those of any private citizen in any community;—that every individual destroyed in war, is no less under the protection of God, than the criminal who stands before a court of justice, where so much care is taken to do no injustice, and that all the pomp and bustle, the apparatus and splendour of war, have no charm in the eye of God, and form no excuse, no palliation, no shield for the destruction of even one man.

Sir, are we to believe that God exercises a moral government over all creatures, that men are accountable to him for every thought, word, and action; and dare we charge him with such negligence and absurdity as to believe, that when once an ambitious and wicked man shall tell a nation to go to war, that immediately all the principles of his strict and dreadful justice are suspended? For myself, I think there is no room to doubt, that, in every man killed in battle, the governor of the world recognizes a distinct and individual murder, attended probably with far more guilt than when a man is way-layed, and falls by the sudden and unforeseen stroke of the assassin. For, in this latter case, but one man is guilty: in the former, there is a double guilt. It is vain to

urge, that soldiers meet and fight and kill each other, without *malice prepense*. They go to the field with a deliberate intention to kill, and that not *one*, but many.

Who dare affirm that the soldier, marching to battle, does not go with far more turpitude of intention than the midnight assassin? His intention is to kill as many as possible. And what are his motives?—These men, at whom he levels his murderous weapons, have never injured him; he has no quarrel with them; and as to the cause in which he fights, he neither has the means of knowing, or the capacity of judging, of its equity. He only knows that they belong to the army of the nation with whom his own nation is at war. Perhaps he is a mercenary, and at all events, the motive of the great body of soldiers is merely their pay, while that of their officers is the love of fame and glory, and the hope of promotion. Arms, Sir, is a *profession*; and I appeal to every man's own conscience, who follows that profession, whether the service of his country is not the least and the last of all his real motives of action. It will do to emblazon his epitaph, but it never warms his heart.

While with these motives the soldier rushes to the bloody conflict, with his arm nerved and his heart steeled to the horrid work of death, he knows well at what hazard he goes; he deliberately encounters the dreadful danger of being sent before the awful throne of judgment. Brutal courage may enable a man to despise the pains of death; but what sort of courage is that which can embolden a sinner to rush into the presence of his final Judge, from the rage of battle, when he has no reason to hope for the Divine favour? If it be not the height of madness, I do not know what is reason.

With infinite hazard he plunges into battle, meets an infuriated wretch like himself who falls before him, closes for ever his probationary state, and sinks down to endless torments. He kills, perhaps, another and another; and the more he kills, the more he is applauded, even by *pious Christians*; at length *he falls himself*, venting horrible oaths and wild execrations, indulging all the furious and bloody passions, and rushes up to Judgment, before the serene and dreadful presence of Him, who has declared, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” What shield is there to cover his enormous vileness? Will the Saviour own him as a disciple? Perhaps his last words were blasphemy against the Saviour.

Ah, Sir, you will not dissent from my opinion when I say, that Heaven's all pure and holy mansions are seldom gained

from the field of battle. You know too well the ineffable atrocity that marks the abode and the progress of armies. The meagre barriers of martial law, form all the restraint generally known both by officers and soldiers. They deride the sabbath—they mock at chastity—a perpetual roar of profanity ascends to heaven: even the barriers of martial law are boldly thrown down in relation to *life*, and a military man must accept a challenge, on however slight occasion given, and must murder if he can, or be killed as he may: they burn for plunder, rapine, revenge; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways.

Sir, what amazing and unmeasureable guilt brands the character of Christian nations, nay of Churches; who, notwithstanding all these known facts, yet throw a cloak over their armies, and say, “there may be some irregularities in a camp, indeed, but the soldiers were brave fellows, they fought well, and died in a good cause;” leaving the incautious mind to make an involuntary and inevitable transition to the idea, that *they fell in a cause which will be their passport to heaven*. Mahomet artfully wove it into his scheme, that every mussulman who fell bravely fighting in his armies and under his orders, went instantly to a paradise of sensual pleasures. He did not do things by the halves. But, Sir, the Christian nations, without the open avowal of Mahomet, do not fail to avail themselves of the same principle. The almost-apotheosis of their heroes; their praises of those who fall in battle, their prayers, hymns, illuminations, and solemn festivals for the dead, give a tone to the public, which would accuse any one of great audacity, were he even to call in question their future felicity; and, in fact, to induce some even to envy their fall. Yet, after all, not a single one of those motives, so proudly graved on monumental marble, or propagated by the trumpet’s voice, as the true basis of their perennial glory, ever reached their hearts, or swayed a single action. The exceptions to this rule, and doubtless there are some, are exceedingly rare.

But how many heroes, while they have listened to the thunders of applause bursting from a nation, telling them what sacrifices they have made, and what victories won, for the good of their country, have felt a silent conviction sickening to their souls, while their consciences whispered, “Alas! deluded wretches, did you know the motives of my conduct as well as I know them, you would see as little cause to celebrate my actions, as I see cause to rejoice in them!” Yet, so sweet, so inebriating are the strains of adulation, that they

are rarely unacceptable, however false and extravagant. They are seldom repelled, though they blasphemously ascribe divine honours to the bloodiest monster on earth.

Besides a due consideration of the grand and ruling motives of fighting men, as well as of the true authors of war, the little apparent good, and the unmeasurable mass of evil, both natural and moral, which war produces;—its unequal, partial, and cruel operation; probably never affecting the person supposed to be guilty;—seldom, if ever procuring a redress of the grievances for which undertaken; suddenly sending hundreds of thousands of guilty wretches, who have no share in the controversy otherwise than as hired labourers, into a miserable eternity; and overwhelming the surviving part of a nation in unspeakable guilt, and in that way training a successive throng of victims for the shambles of the field of blood: I say, these things duly considered, there never entered the human mind a more vile and audacious imputation on the Divine character, than the supposition that, *when two nations, unfortunately, as is sometimes said, get at war, Divine Justice winks at the scene; that, though there must have been some wrong somewhere, yet as they are now both fairly engaged, it is certainly the duty of both nations to fight bravely for their own laws and customs; that God is on the whole pleased to see their patriotism and bravery; and, in fine, now gives them full permission to fight it out.*

This, Sir, is the bearing which national wars hold in the minds of Christians. But, the fantastic and delusive forms by which pride and ambition thus plunge millions in misery, are loathsome in the sight of God. While there is one set of men who have objects to accomplish by setting others at war, another set, who are willing to seek renown and glory in that horrid business,—it furnishing the most abundant fuel for the flame of their passions; there is a third and very numerous class, whose vices have already excluded them from all the walks of life, except those where destruction and death have erected their standard, and claim dominion,—these are the ruthless soldiery, who are willing to kill and be killed for wages.

In the mean time, the secret movers of war see how their own purposes may be answered by a war; they issue a proclamation of war. Perhaps by a proper spirit of concession and benevolence, the difficulty could have been all removed by amicable negotiation: perhaps the proclamation does not assign the real and grand motives of the war, which the movers of it would blush to publish, and then is the whole pro-

clamation an audacious falsehood ;—or peradventure the proclamation sets forth causes wholly inadequate to the dreadful expedient resorted to.

Sir, the supposed efficacy of proclamations to legalize the slaughter of thousands, and perhaps of millions of men, as one of the steps whereby it is contended God has permitted nations to fall upon each other with relentless fury, has never been duly examined, and the amazing atrocity of the principles it involves thoroughly exposed. An object so enormous—so hideous in its features—so diabolical in its nature, so dreadful in its effects, could not escape the notice of any one who took the most cursory survey of this subject ; but it has only shared a glance of the eye and perhaps a dash of the pen. These proclamations are generally considered of omnipotent force to level all objections to the equity of war ; they quiet the conscience, and reconcile the most pious, scrupulous, and zealous Christian to any war, though ever so apparently wicked and unjust ; for he says, “ True, indeed, I do not believe the war is either just or politic, but my government has proclaimed war, and if unjustly, it is their concern, not mine ; I have nothing to do but to fight for my own nation and country ;” and thus it is rashly presumed that the sanction of the God of the universe, by a mere diplomatic trick or falsehood, is extorted to cover all the cruelty, murder, and wickedness that shall follow, merely because it is an act of government and therefore legal. But, this shall be the subject of the following letter.

In the mean time, suffer me to say, that, in relation to wars between nations, what God has not commanded he has not permitted ; and those governments and nations who have rushed into this bloody work so frequently, and with such confidence in the Divine permission, have already received, or have still to receive, a dreadful retribution from him who has said, “ Thou shalt not kill : He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword.”

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XII.

Declarations of war considered.

SIR,

The ultimate decision of the question, whether war shall be proclaimed or not, generally rests in very few hands, often in *one*.

But, let us suppose a declaration of war is made, when it is well known to its immediate author or authors, and even to the great body of the nation, that the whole dispute might be easily adjusted by amicable negotiation, without the loss of a life, or any of the troubles of war : let us suppose that negotiations entered into, for the sake of an appearance to the people, have been artfully frustrated, the aggrievances greatly exaggerated, haughty and insulting attitudes assumed, and provoking language and menaces used by the men who wish for war, with a view to excite hostility, and widen the difference between the two powers as much as possible ; while, at the same time, an ardent desire for peace is expressed, and the most pompous professions and pretences of amicable dispositions every where trumpeted and boasted.

At length, however, with many expressions of regret at the necessary but dire alternative, war is proclaimed, and they venture to appeal, as they often express it, “ to the God of battles.” Can any thing, Sir, in the history of governments, be found more odious—any thing from which the moral sense of mankind revolts with more indignation and contempt ? Yet how often has this farce of falsehood and folly been acted ?

The men who proclaim this war, well know that the existing cause of complaint might be obviated by negotiation, but have no reason to think or to hope it can by war : yet war they want for far other purposes.

I have here proceeded on the presumption that war is sometimes admissible, and that in the present case the aggrievance is very great, and even a sufficient cause for war. I therefore, for a moment, yield the controversy its main ground, in order more fully to expose the inconsistency of the authors of war on their own ground. And, in the first place, a declaration of war, under the above mentioned circumstances, is contrary to the maxims of the wisest and ablest human legislators, who with one consent declare that war should not be made but in the very last resort, and especially, not till the utmost efficacy of negotiation has failed.

Sir, it is of little consequence what men may think or pretend, on this business. The Ruler of the Universe, who is the Judge of judges, and the true Guardian of the lives of men, will judge, and all the smooth language and courtly arts of diplomatists and statesmen, will force no imposition on his eternal wisdom. If he sees the amicable professions to be false, the pretences about peace deceitful, the negotiations insincere, and their effects frustrated by design, he cannot but abhor the whole transaction ; and, however much men

may repose in the legality of such a war, God will judge its authors, and will charge to their account *all* the blood that shall be shed, as the blood of murder.

Nothing, in the course of my speculations, has more surprised me than that men so fearful of death, and so deeply abhorring murder, under certain circumstances, should so suddenly lose all regard for human life, and see thousands after thousands butchered under the slightest and falsest of all pretences. And, Sir, rulers, in this case, are not alone guilty; nations that eagerly rush to shed blood, share equally in the guilt. If any regard is due to the word of God; if there is any meaning, any propriety in the solemn forms of civil trial for life; if God Almighty has said, "THOU SHALT NOT KILL," it is the duty of *every man* to know who, and wherefore he kills. The plea of ignorance is nothing—affords no shelter. The man who takes his sword or gun, and proceeds deliberately, and with all his power, to killing his fellow-creatures, his brethren, for such they are, merely because some other man has commanded him to do it, is a murderer before God, and if he dies in that work, he will be likely to sink to endless perdition. When two armies are engaged, to say the least, one or the other of them is certainly fighting in a bad cause. And can the wretched throng of common soldiers hope to throw all the responsibility on their officers—the officers on the commander in chief, and he on the president, king, or monarch of a nation? Alas! there is a far more general and diffusive guilt in this horrid business than all this would seem to indicate.

The field of general slaughter is black with individual guilt; and if there is a scene above all others delightful to devils, it must be where two adverse armies are engaged in mutual havoc and destruction. But to pursue the case of the declaration of war, with which this Letter commenced, let us imagine a soldier in the army of a nation, at once made fully acquainted with the circumstances under which he was fighting: let him be told that peace might have been maintained, and that all the injuries, which he was fighting to redress, might have been amicably redressed by friendly negotiation: but that his government chose war in preference to peace, to gratify their revenge and ambition: would he not say to himself, "Am I then killing these men merely because it will gratify the revenge and ambition of my rulers? Am I exposing myself to the same fate, for the same vile purpose? Is my eternal destiny thus to be sported with, thus to be covered with the guilt of murder?" No! There is not one soldier perhaps in a million ever assailed by such re-

flections. They care nothing about the justice of their cause: they fight and kill because they have engaged in that profession, and because all regard for human life and the destinies of the soul, is quite obliterated from their minds. It is enough to satisfy their conscience for them to say, "We are at war with these men, and therefore we must kill them if we can."

Will the vague and general notion of being at war with men, without any consideration of the true causes and grounds of that war, give impunity to the armies that take the field, for the purpose of dealing slaughter and devastation? Will the soldier's plea, that he fought in obedience to the order of his commanders, screen him from the cry of blood which his murderous arm has poured upon the earth? Will the officer's pompous defence, that he fought to advance the military renown of his country and acquire fame in arms, have more weight before God than the tears of the widow and orphan, whom his thirst for glory has deprived of their only support and comfort? Will it overbalance the lives he has suddenly taken away, and the misery and ruin he has caused? In short, Sir, will the plea of the legislator who proclaimed this war, be admitted as just; that although he might have had peace and a redress of wrongs by negotiation, yet, he preferred war, because it would give himself and his country more respectability and importance, both at home and abroad?

That ruler, Sir, who plunges his country in war, when peace may be had by negotiation, at a thousandth part of the expense, merely for the sake of establishing his own power and importance, and convincing the world that he rules over a people who can fight bravely, is a murderer of the first class; his guilt is beyond conception great, and he was raised up to be a scourge and a curse to his country. As for his proclamation, it will neither afford himself nor his country any shield, or any manner of excuse; whatever it may be supposed to add to the legality of the war in the sight of men, God is not mocked, neither will eternal justice regard the false pretences and self-deceptions of men.

But as we are now set down before a main fortress of the war system, which is intended to smooth the way for nations to get at war legally, whatever may be the original ground of the contention, I beg, Sir, I may be permitted to go into each particular topic of argument. The proclamation being as above stated, a member of the community will say, "We surely have a right, and it is our duty, to fight, because our

government has proclaimed war, and we must support our government. "That Law," says judge Blackstone, "which contravenes the law of God, is nugatory, and of no force." When one man is ordered to take the life of another, it is not sufficient for him to know that the man who gives the command is a magistrate clothed with legal authority, under certain circumstances, to take life. The judge, who on the bench, in the result of a solemn trial, pronounces sentence of death upon a man, cannot meet a man in the street and order him to kill a second person whom they shall meet.

The affairs of nations are public and open to inspection. Individuals may quarrel privately; nations cannot. There are no conceivable or possible forms of diplomatic sorcery which can give a nation of men a right to rush to war with their eyes shut; neither can any authority of magistrates, laws, or government, cause it to become the duty of one nation to fall upon another, either with no apparent cause, or with causes obviously insufficient. The authority of human government has no power to sanction wickedness; neither can it by any force of construction enable a nation of people to violate the law of God with impunity.

This doctrine of implicit obedience to revengeful ambitious and restless governments and rulers, has been, of all others, the most destructive to nations, and the greatest curse to the earth. Men of this description, whatever may be their rank and grade of office, are incapable of judging with candour on the great question of peace or war. Their measures of utility and national welfare, are false and pernicious; their only standard of judgment is self-aggrandizement.

What if war be proclaimed in due form? The great Arbitrator of nations knows it might have been avoided—knows the proclamation to have been dictated by the vilest motives; and, in fact, the great body of the nation know it, or have the means of knowing it. What shall be done in this case? shall the people rush into such a war, because it is their duty to support the government? This indeed is the doctrine vehemently maintained.

A people, Sir, may, in this way, support their government, but they will assuredly draw down upon themselves the vengeance of God. It is for this reason, that eternal truth has declared, and all experience supports the declaration, that when the wicked bear rule, the land mourns. The nation that obeys the voice of wicked rulers, rather than the voice of God, shall mourn.

It often happens that a declaration of war does not set

forth the true reasons why the rulers of a nation wish for war. Their real motive may be their own aggrandizement; their security in power; the desire of revenge, of humbling a nation, of gaining merit and favour with another nation, of making some conquest, or of accomplishing some object of ambition. But these, which are the true and only motives of their conduct, they, by no means, wish to avow or have known. They, therefore, fasten upon certain acts of their intended adversary, construe them into violations of the law of nations, exaggerate them, assume a hostile and threatening attitude and aspect; endeavour to provoke new aggressions, make things worse by haughty demands and negotiations, frustrated by their own intrigues; and thus eventually bring themselves and the power with whom they wish to be at war, on such ground as to render a declaration of war popular.

The Almighty Ruler of nations knows, that not one of the real causes of the war, is set up in the declaration; of course He knows the declaration to be totally false, and He views it as the vile and atrocious instrument of death and desolation, and misery to millions of people. Are we to presume, Sir, that God will connive at this horrid plan of mischief and wickedness; that because it has, among men, violently extorted the concession of legality, he will give it his sanction, and that he requires all the millions of people over whom these monsters of hypocrisy and falsehood bear sway, to seize their arms and give their blood and treasure to support this war?

Neither is there as much of deception in all this business as may be readily imagined by the unwary. For, generally speaking, nations of people understand as truly the grounds on which their government make war, as the rulers themselves.

Shall the rulers of a nation avail themselves of falsehood and hypocrisy, to render war legal and popular? Will the Sovereign of nations be deceived with mere pretences, as when one thing is said and the contrary intended? But it will be urged, that in such cases, the guilt will be upon rulers, and that the people have only to obey. I have already replied to this evasion. Rarely indeed is it that people are deceived; and the more enlightened portion of society, a very numerous class, know as well on what ground they stand, and from what motives they act, as their rulers.

We have considered the injustice and wickedness of a proclamation, where its authors know that *peace may be had, and redress obtained by negotiation*; since, in all such cases, it is evident that war is preferred for its own sake, and

the reasons assigned, are merely a diplomatic manoeuvre, to draw the people into the views of government. We have also considered the case in which the declaration does not express the true motives of the war.

There is another fault in declarations of war, which must destroy their efficacy to render it the duty of the people to give them their support. The reasons they allege for making war, are generally inadequate causes of war; admitting them to be ever so sincere, true, and genuine, and war under some circumstances to be just.

The long established habit of nations falling on one another, with fire and sword, and shedding the blood of thousands for any cause, or for no cause, has taken off restraint, and banished regard for human life, and reverence for divine authority, from the great body of mankind. Whilst they are exhausting the slow and solemn forms of civil law, in trying the most atrocious murderer for life, as though his life was worth more than millions of money, and guarded by the high and awful sanctions of the law of God;—they will rush to war on the most frivolous pretence, or in fact, without any satisfactory cause, merely because a certain man, or body of men have issued a proclamation of war, assigning reasons which they know, and freely acknowledge, are inadequate; but then they are bound to do it, because the declaration of war is an act of government. Is then civil government so potent and sacred, that it can, by the dash of a pen, perhaps under the influence of the fumes of wine, or some rash and headlong passion, or more probably directed by cold deliberate and calculating ambition, in a moment, release a whole nation from the eternal obligations of justice; drive them like a flock of sheep to the field of slaughter, and wrest from those that remain at home the blessings of peace, which are the chief blessings of life itself?

Sir, I think not: I am fully persuaded that no act of government can render it right, that a nation should engage in an unjust and wicked war. A declaration of war tending to this result, furnishes no impunity to the people, by throwing the responsibility upon their rulers. It is, indeed, the duty of rulers to take care what laws they make, and what declarations they promulgate, as they value the approbation of the Almighty Law-giver; but it is nevertheless the duty of people and nations to know to what purpose they contend, and for what cause they shed the blood of men.

It was never, Sir, among the ends of civil governments, to release nations from their obligations to the law of God.

They have often been perverted to this vile purpose, and have as often become the curse and scourge of nations. When human laws, institutions, or enterprises, interfere with that awful authority, which is universal and eternal as God himself, the names by which they are called no longer avail them. The authors of such laws, and the authorities by which they are carried into effect, are doubtless involved in the deepest guilt; but those who obey them cannot be innocent.

Crimes perpetrated under the sanction of human laws, lose not their atrocity by that sanction; "the people," who commit them, "shall be taken away in their iniquity."

But as this point now universally stands throughout all Christendom, sanctioned by the voice of *Christian nations* and the *Christian Churches*, nothing is necessary to pave the way to a legal war between any two nations, but a formal declaration of war by government; however causeless the war, however false and groundless the declaration, and however evidently so to the whole of both nations about to rush to mutual destruction. For they say, "War is declared, and we must obey our rulers."

Sir, for one nation to fall upon another unjustly, with full intention to kill, conquer, and enslave, is a sin as much greater than when one individual falls on another, with the same intention, as a nation is more important than an individual. I still go on the admissibility of defensive war. But if the government of a country should pass a law, that one man in a certain neighbourhood, should go to his next neighbour's house, set it on fire, kill his neighbour, ravage his farm, and carry off what plunder he could; assigning as a reason, that the man who was to make the war, had been grossly insulted by his neighbour, who, on certain occasions, had interrupted his labours, perhaps thrown down his fence, &c. &c. &c. Would not all men be amazed at this minute proclamation of war? Would the man in whose favour it was issued, consider himself as authorized to act accordingly?

But let us vary the supposition. Let it be supposed that the man against whom this individual warfare was to be made, lived within the borders of another nation: would that circumstance lessen his astonishment? Would such an act of government lessen, in his view, the atrocity of the deed thus authorized? No: he would think such a law passed under the influence of insanity.

The horrible custom of war has, in relation to itself, gone far to abolish from the human mind, I may say, all the

dictates of common justice, and even of common sense. Would mankind be astonished at an act of any government, like the above? I take it upon me to say, that all the difference between that individual war, thus proclaimed, and a national war, proclaimed for inadequate reasons, lies in favour of the individual war: all the arguments in favour of the former, are still stronger in favour of the latter; and all the objections to such an individual war are infinitely stronger against proclaiming an unjust war against a nation. The conduct, therefore, which one man ought to pursue, being authorized as above, to fall upon another, ought to be pursued by a nation, thus let loose on another nation, by a wicked and merciless government.

In the above individual war, the guilty person would be punished, and the offended person be the punisher. But should it be said reparation might be obtained another, and much better, way; so might it in the case of a nation: nor is there one war among a thousand, in which, with a proper spirit of accommodation, a due redress might not have been obtained. And the fact is, that in most cases, aggressions are provoked, or take their origin from such minute and intricate collisions, that no human tribunal would be competent to settle the question of original blame, though ever so truly disposed to do impartial justice.

Would it be said that in every well regulated state, there are laws for the recovery of rights and the redress of wrongs; and that of course no government has a right to proclaim war between one citizen and another? Neither, I answer, has any government a right to proclaim war against a nation without an adequate cause; and the sin in the latter case is as much greater than in the former, as *millions are greater than one*. Besides, whose fault is it that there are not established laws among neighbouring nations, for the adjustment of disputes, as well as among individuals? Is it not but too evident, that nations have carefully avoided any arrangements, that would effectually shut the door against war on the most frivolous pretences: that they desire no such arrangements, because they choose to keep the door for war perpetually open; so that every nation may choose its own time and occasions for falling upon its neighbours?

Again, I ask, whose fault is it, that it is not as unpopular, as disgraceful, as abhorrent to the common sense of mankind, as contrary to established custom, and to known rules and laws, for one nation to fall, justly or unjustly, upon another, as for an individual? Those laws are thought wise which

forbid an individual to be his own avenger, although there is much personal gratification; although the injured person avenges and the aggressor suffers: why then should a nation be its own avenger, which can feel no gratification, and has no power to reach the true and real aggressor?

Or, on the other hand, will it be said, that nations ought sometimes to go to war on very small provocations, for the sake of *national honour*? What is national honour? Surely not any thing that is sinful; for *sin is a reproach to any people*. No sinful act, or series of acts, in which a nation, as a body, concurred, ever promoted the honour of that nation. I hope and trust, Sir, there need be no difficulty in convincing Christians of the solidity of this ground. Among devils, indeed, it may be accounted honourable to act like a devil; but Christians are taught to estimate honour by a different standard. The author of five sermons, in defence of war, above alluded to, is indeed of the opinion, that "the equity of a war little depends on the magnitude of the injury; and if the evil inflicted be small, there is less excuse for the aggressor." But whether he measures honour by the Christian or diabolical standard, I shall leave all men to judge. It is, indeed, of little consequence to him how men may judge, and will make nothing for him, should nations approve his principles, which they probably will, so long as they wish for some cloak to hide their guilt; but God will try this work, as by fire, and a day will declare it of what sort it is.

The custom of war has been so universally and so long prevalent, that mankind generally make no distinction among the causes from which it originates; and no odium rests on any nation, on the ground of having waged an unjust war. While all mankind unite their imprecations to express the deepest abhorrence of a man who commits one murder, they will, as readily, unite their voices in praise of Alexander, Cæsar, or Bonaparte, whose cruel ambition thinned the world of its inhabitants, and shed the blood of many millions of people. Even the Church of Christ is carried away with this torrent, and *all* wars are legitimated simply by the consideration, that they are waged or carried on by a nation or government. Men will readily allow, when speculating on the question, *in thesi*, that a war may be unjust; but when the case occurs, in fact, they give themselves no trouble about a question, so perplexing as the true cause of a war. The sovereign authority of a nation has done it, and is supposed to be alone accountable for it.

I have shown that a declaration of war, even admitting

defensive war to be right, cannot screen a nation from guilt ; either,

1. When peace might have been preserved by amicable negotiation ; or,

2. When the declaration sets forth false reasons ; or

3. When the reasons assigned are inadequate. It is not to be doubted, that most declarations of war come under one or another of these descriptions. Of what avail, therefore, they will be before the Judge of nations, every one may form his own estimate.

But the reader is ready to demand, what we are to do ? To this I have already answered : but I will add, if we are commanded to engage in an unjust war, we have but one question to decide, and that is a very plain one ; whether we ought to obey God or man. For I repeat what I have already said, even if it be admitted that in some cases it is right to kill a man, yet that act cannot be performed by any human being short of the guilt of murder, who does not clearly know why or wherefore it must be done, and what the ground of his right is to do it.

But it will be said in reply to this, “ If every man in a nation, and every soldier in an army, has got all this to learn, before he can go to killing, war would be a very slow business.” So it would, and in the name of heaven, so it ought to be. The very lowest instruments of war, the private soldiers of an army, and especially all who fight by profession, without regard to the cause, are certainly guilty of murder. The man who kills his fellow-man, without knowing him to be worthy of death, and also knowing himself to have a right to take his life, is a murderer. The man that kills men, merely because it is commonly said, “ *we are at war with them,*” without any knowledge of the reasons why, is a murderer. The man that kills, in a cause which he knows to be unjust, is a murderer, and such are all cases which come under the three cases just above stated.

In fine, if there were no wars but such as are strictly defensive, and none were to kill, but such as have a right to do it on the principle of justice, there would be few wars, and few men would fall in battle. But, alas ! we decline after a multitude to do evil. Mankind are wedded to the false idea, that numbers sanctify a deed. When war is proclaimed, however unjustly, and when numbers, when multitudes, when nations rush to battle, they forget that there is a God who judges in the earth, who will make inquisition for blood.

But I have dwelt too long upon mere hypothesis, and

especially on one, to which it would be as difficult to bring nations of men, as to the eternal truth of the gospel. For the principle which makes mankind so avaricious of blood, has no inclination to restrict the dreadful right of killing. For that right they are willing to substitute any pretext; and indeed, where all pretext and subterfuge fail, they cheer, encourage, and support themselves, by no consideration but that of numbers and example; never considering that God will punish nations as well as individuals.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Recapitulation.

SIR,

I HAVE endeavoured to show that war cannot be vindicated under the sanction of a Divine command, nor of Divine permission, importing equal authority. In the course of this discussion, I have, I trust, shown that the *lex talionis naturæ*, or the natural law of retaliation, which was known in the antediluvian world, admitted and recognized in the Divine direction to Noah, and fully explained and incorporated in the penal code of Moses, was entirely and expressly repealed by Jesus Christ. For as it is admitted, on all hands, that several precepts of the decalogue are repealed, under the gospel, as capitally penal, though not as moral laws; and as that precept in special, which regards taking life for life, is the highest case of retaliation, as well as of resisting evil, both of which Christ forbids, I conclude that the authority of the law of Moses, in regard of taking life is done away. Indeed, I presume, that our tribunals, which still continue to take life for murder, will readily admit that it is done away, so far as to leave it discretionary with the supreme authority of every nation to say whether life shall be taken, or some other punishment substituted. As they in fact use this discretion in several other penal precepts, which the Mosaic law rendered capital, and as no such discretion was used by the ancient Hebrew tribunals, they must derive this license from the mild spirit of the gospel. The gospel, no doubt, from its genuine spirit, as well as particular precepts, extends its dispensing and softening power to every case and form of capital punishment.

I have shown that men's solicitude for self-defence adds nothing to their security ; that their promptitude to revenge is an arrogant invasion of the rights of God ; and that, taken both together, they have shed torrents where they have spared drops of blood, and where they have saved one, have destroyed millions of lives. And, even admitting that defensive war is right, yet, I have, I think, clearly shown, where a war is unjustly waged, that neither a formal declaration of war, nor the ready co-operation of nations, does in any degree lessen the guilt arising from that war : nor is that guilt limited to a few men at the head of affairs, but extends like a sudden and dreadful contagion to all the armies, to all the people, and probably to every individual soul co-operating.

I have never seen this point sufficiently illustrated. It surely has not been duly considered by people who have some conscience, some fear of God, some horror at incurring the guilt of murder. It is in this way that whole nations of people become murderers, are imbued and blackened in that horrid guilt again and again. In nothing has the human mind been so blinded, so surprisingly infatuated, as in the sanguinary business of war. If this point were duly understood, it would not be so easy a matter for the most bloody tyrant to set his people at war. Every man would consider what he was going about.

Is the Divine government so feeble, partial, and capricious, then ; does it pay so great and scrupulous a regard, when a man way-lays and stabs his neighbour, and yet no regard when whole nations bleed ? Does eternal justice sleep when the dying groans of thousands pierce the skies ? when the blood of millions cries from the ground ?

Who killed these people ? Oh ! nobody. They died in battle. They were killed by the opposite army, who are soldiers by profession ! And this answer is satisfactory to a wretched infatuated mortal, who considers not that the eye of God is on this scene of carnage, and views every dead body as one distinct and individual murder. Never was there a delusion so deep and dreadful ! Of all errors it is the most destructive and atrocious that ever seized on the human mind. "*We are at war !*" In that one little sentence there is a charm which makes man totally forget the value of life, or the immortal destinies of the soul ; which makes him careless of murder, and fearless of the wrath of God. Apprehensions, perhaps, may flit about him sometimes, and a little remorse of conscience ; but he is ready to say, " No matter, that is not my business. It is the business of the nation, the

government; and, if we are by chance wrong, that wrong is to be divided amongst so many of us that my share will be small." Deluded soul! such reasonings will not stand before God! "WE ARE AT WAR." So mighty is the charm of that word, that professing Christians, and even ministers, lose all scruples about the equity or iniquity of the cause, and hurry to the bloody conflict. Nay, even when they know they are on the wrong side; when they know their government was either mistaken or wilful, and waged war unjustly, yet, "*We are at war*, and must now kill as many as we can." Nor is their idea less groundless with regard to a distribution of guilt; for so surely as eternal Justice governs the world, every abettor and supporter of an unjust war, is chargeable with the blood that is shed, with the misery that is endured, with the crimes that are perpetrated.

This point has perhaps, been sufficiently considered in a former letter, but I could not pass it here without additional animadversion. For, it is the cause of humanity I plead, that if by any means some might be roused to consideration, before another opportunity shall present of plunging themselves in guilt already so enormous. Tell me, ye abettors of war, whether any one of you ever stood by the bed of a dying man, and saw his last agonies, and witnessed the awful anxieties of his parting soul, and did not shudder? Now is the final pang;—and while the cold clay settles into death's stern slumber, the immortal spirit appears before the throne of God to receive its doom. Tell me whether you ever approached the horrid scene where one criminal is executed, without the mingled sensations of terror, regret, and consternation? It is too shocking to be endured by the feeling spectator. Your mind fluctuates with the rapidity of lightning from the atrocity of his crime, to the severity of his doom—from his character to his prospects, and from his situation to your own. And I will pledge myself, that your humane feelings, with rapid haste, often rush up to the avenues of mercy in this extreme moment, and with burning eye you look away towards the sources of pardon, to see if there can be no relief.

It is no difficult matter to perceive, that a sin against society may be such as to forfeit all the benefits of society; and in this light the laws of society contemplate crime and punishment. They do not punish crimes as moral evils or transgressions against God. Did the death of the criminal extend to nothing but this just privation, it could not be objected to; but a sentence of death often ends with this petition, "*And the Lord have mercy on his soul!*" Does this prayer com-

port with the sentence to which it forms the close? I will take it upon me to say, if the Lord is as regardless of his eternal welfare as those who sentence him to death, and plunge him into eternity, when they have reason to believe he is unprepared, this prayer will be of no avail. Their language is, "We will do him all the hurt we can, and may God do him as much good as he pleases."

But when you see the criminal ready to plunge from the ignominious scaffold into eternal perdition, and consider that even his present hour, deplorable as it is, is the best hour he will ever more enjoy, the spectacle is, as I said, too shocking to be endured. God grant to hasten the time when these spectacles shall no more be seen!

But where are all these tender feelings, these generous and humane sensibilities in the field of battle, where perhaps ten, twenty, or fifty thousand men, the pride and flower of nations, perish in a day; where fields are strewed and covered with dead bodies, further than the eye can extend? Where are those strict, and solemn, and pompous forms of justice, conning the details of evidence with an eagle's eye, and, even when full proof is made out, loth to pronounce the dreadful sentence? Ah! no such ceremony was here. In all these deaths there was nothing but rage and uproar, and hurry, and tumult, and confusion. Here was no conviction of crime, nor denouncing of sentence. The most horrible passions; the deadliest causes; the wildest rage, was here with every effort to deal promiscuous death. In this scene of slaughter, no one knew by whom he fell: heroes perished by the basest arm, and souls fled without a requiem to judgment.

But will the eternal Judge, clothed with omnipotent power and justice, receive those souls, thus rushing into his presence, with smiles of approbation; these souls from the midst of horrid crimes, agitated with the passions of devils, and covered with blood? Will he view this scene as most men do, as a kind of political evil where the guilt is too general and indeterminate to fix on any individual? Will it be satisfactory to him, that these were soldiers by profession, and died in their calling? Will he esteem it that they fell in the bed of honour? O fatal mistake! They must there learn, but when it is too late, that the soul's eternal destinies are not thus to be trifled with. Life cannot be thus thrown away, but with infinite guilt and presumption.

The man that takes his life in his hand, and goes to the field of battle, has two grand accounts to adjust before he can act consistently. The first is not merely, whether the object for

which he contends is of sufficient consequence to warrant him, nay to require him to sacrifice all his worldly prospects; this would be a trifle: but, whether the object requires him to put a final period to his probationary state, and rush from the fury of battle into the presence of God, and as it were prematurely to demand his final and eternal sentence. The second is, whether he has an object in view that will warrant him in killing as many of his fellow-creatures as he can, and sending their souls in all probability to endless perdition. And I am bold to say, if all men would duly consider these two things, there is not a man on earth who would ever go to battle. But so far from adjusting these grand points, most men have no object which leads them to war, further than to get their bread or to acquire fame and promotion. Of course their conduct must be abhorred by God himself, and all holy beings.

It is not folly that leads them on; it goes far beyond that term. It is madness—it is infatuation. Nor has the hope of the poor deluded through any, the slightest foundation, that all the responsibility will rest upon their leaders or their government, or their nation. Nor will an artful, insidious declaration of war, shield them from guilt. Men may ascribe wonderful efficacy and importance to these diplomatic arts, to these instruments of state policy, which suddenly call forth fleets and armies, and embroil millions of people; but they are nothing before that God who judges through the dark cloud, and in spite of all disguises weighs the actions of men. He requires truth in the inward parts, nor can diplomatic skill, however it may lead nations astray, or please or satisfy princes, be able, by craft and falsehood, to cover crimes with the Divine sanction.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XIV.

War not necessary to national safety.

SIR,

WHATEVER nation or individual goes contrary to the will of God for fear of the consequences of obedience, will in the end, be unavoidably liable to the worst consequences. One of the most popular objections to a nation disclaiming

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the right, and refraining from, the practice of war, is, that that nation would be liable to insult, degradation, oppression, and subjugation. It must be confessed, this objection is not without much plausibility, and requires to be duly considered. The object of this letter, therefore, shall be to consider what would be the condition and fortunes of a nation that should utterly disclaim and discontinue war, together with all capital punishment. However that nation might fare, I frankly declare, that I should prefer to stake my own fortunes, and those of my children to all future times, in that pacific nation, rather than in another as warlike as ancient Rome, all other circumstances being equal.

There can be no doubt, and I take it as a granted point, that war, taken on a large scale, and as it has been pursued by nations in all ages, does add immensely to the number and weight of human miseries. I believe, that political, moral, and theological writers, are united, to a man, in this opinion. The question has, therefore, been often considered, whether the time would not arrive, that nations would come to a right understanding of this point, and would agree to settle their disputes by some grand pacific arbitration, which would be found far cheaper, surer, more humane, more magnanimous, and more satisfactory than war. Nations, indeed, taking the people at large, would easily come into this plan; it would be matter of inexpressible joy to the great body of the people. It is not nations, but rulers and governments, which keep alive the spirit and fashion of war.

Should intelligence arrive that all the monarchs of Europe had assembled in one grand convention, and had by a unanimous vote determined to abolish the custom of war; had drawn the outlines of a plan for a grand tribunal, before which the differences of nations should be adjusted; moreover that able statesmen and civilians were already engaged in enlarging and perfecting a code to be adopted as the law of nations: how do you imagine, Sir, such intelligence would be received in our own country? Would it not be hailed with universal joy, as the dawn of a more glorious era? It would not sound like an alliance *offensive* and *defensive* made between two or three potent nations, when about to attack and dismember one of their weak neighbours.

Let us further suppose, that this grand convention of rulers had sent an ambassador, clothed with special powers, to invite our government to join them. What would be the voice of the people in this country? would they say, "No: we choose to keep up the old system of animosity, war, invasion,

and violence. We intend to invade and fight you as soon as we are able!" I think not, Sir. I think there are not many spirits hardy enough, many faces sufficiently unblushing in these States, to dare propose the rejection of a more illustrious overture than was ever yet made to a nation. The voice of the great body of the people would be, "Yes, let us join in this universal and perpetual peace; let wars be done away, the useless contentions of nations for ever cease, and the human family become brethren."

O, Sir, I cannot but dwell with delight on a vision so glorious; I cannot but indulge my imagination on this grand idea, though it exists only in idea. I seem to hear the official manifesto or proclamation of this august and pacific congress, addressed to monarchs and nations: perhaps it might run something in the following strain; though we may readily conceive that the novelty and grandeur of such an occasion, would give an originality and glow, a spirit and unction to their style, which no pen, uninspired by a like occasion, can reach:

"The monarchs, princes, and rulers of Europe, assembled in congress, to their brethren the kings of the earth, to all states, and to all people, on the first day of the era of Peace, send greeting:

"BRETHREN,

"THE great design and end of government is the happiness of mankind. Though this has long been a received principle, yet, unfortunately for rulers and for subjects, the means which governments have used for the accomplishment of that end, have in a great measure failed of success. War is equally the disgrace and the scourge of nations. It shortens human life, and diminishes the number and quality of its enjoyments, while it lasts. Though it may sometimes result in conquest, power, and dominion, yet those acquisitions bring with them guilt, which Almighty Providence never fails to punish, and vices which undermine the foundations, and destroy the fabric of the greatest empires.

"The late wars which have for twenty years ravaged the nations over which we rule, have effectually taught us the vanity of ambition, and to how little purpose nations shed each other's blood; and have brought us to the present happy result. Reason itself, and the light of nature, might have done this; they are sufficient to convince every one who will listen to their dictates, of the superior advantages of peace. Between peace and war, indeed, there is no comparison of

advantages, since peace alone leads to enjoyment, war tends to degradation and misery.

“But we are members of one great community, whose grand law is Love, and whose head is the Prince of Peace. We deeply regret and deplore, that by cultivating so long the spirit and maxims of war, we have fixed an indelible prejudice in the nations of the globe, professing a different faith, against the religion we profess and the God we adore. We hasten to wipe away this stain, and to make all the reparation in our power, by giving peace to our own subjects, and by inviting the nations of the world to unite with us in a universal league of amity, that there may be peace on earth and good will to men, and then shall there be glory to God in the highest.

“Illustrious sovereigns of nations! you are exalted to power that you may use it for the glory of God, and for the good of his creatures. The life of man is short; let its prolongation and security be the object of our legislative and paternal care. Life is encompassed with calamities and sorrows; why should we continue voluntarily to mingle in its cup the bitterest ingredients and strongest poison? The highest honour which an earthly potentate can hope to gain, is to be the father of his people, to secure them from danger, and promote their happiness. In this way he will resemble the great Lord of all, whose kingdom is the universe, and whose good Providence extends to innumerable orders of creatures.

“Hitherto, man has been the worst enemy of man. Let this be the glorious era of universal reconciliation. Let us this day consolidate a peace that shall be lasting and extensive as the world. It will be pleasing to the common Father of all; the God of heaven will smile upon it from his throne, and perhaps refrain from making inquisition for blood already shed, and shut up the stores of his retributive justice, now ready to scatter plagues and destruction over the face of the earth, for past offences.

“Monarchs and rulers! what more pleasing recollection can we carry with us beyond the grave, than that of having lightened the load of human woes, than the consciousness that millions of people have been made more happy and more wise by our administration? What pleasure can we promise ourselves by remembering that we have slain thousands in battle? May not that God who has said, “Thou shalt not kill,” and who is mighty in power and strict in justice, cause the injured spirits of those we have slain, to crowd around us, and with fierce and dreadful imprecations, and such means of

tormenting as immortal spirits may possess, become our punishers? Let us be mindful that the regal pomp, the ensigns of majesty, which now surround us, will be no security against the demands of Justice, in the hand of omnipotence.

“O let us hasten, by reparation to the living, to save ourselves from the terrible reparation due to the dead. Has not the system of war been sufficiently proved to show its destructive and disgraceful nature? What miseries do not mark its progress? What vices do not follow in its train? It threatens alike destruction to conquerors and conquered. In vain do we seek to cement the foundations of our thrones in blood. ‘For he that takes the sword; shall perish with the sword.’”

“It is time that the earth had rest from the commotions of war. It is time we began to teach our children, that they are born for other and nobler purposes than shedding human blood. We earnestly invite the nations of the earth to join with us in the bonds of peace. We solemnly pledge ourselves to live in amity with all nations, and that this may be mutual and permanent, we cordially invite them to send their delegates, who may represent them in the Congress of Peace, now assembled, or hereafter to assemble, to co-operate with us in promoting peace and prosperity through the world.

“People of Europe! we address you as our beloved children; and we congratulate you on the glorious events of this day. You are now alive, and survive the desolating war of many years, which has overthrown and re-established states and kingdoms, and filled every corner of Europe with slaughter and mourning; you, we are persuaded, are prepared for a new order of things. You have had full opportunity to see to what purpose it is that men fight and destroy each other. It is to gratify the ambition of men who have no regard for your welfare. Let national animosities and jealousies be forgotten in perpetual peace, let them be superseded by the nobler affection of brotherly love.

“Let Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, Spaniards, and Italians, view each other as brethren. As friends, you can benefit each other; but as enemies you have no power to benefit yourselves. In a scene of general prosperity, a man is secured in the prosecution of laudable enterprises. But moral virtue, social principle, humane feeling, every valuable interest, every thing which makes man great and good! is forgotten and for ever lost in war. Children of our love, you occupy that region of the earth where the human mind has displayed its highest excellencies, its strongest powers. You cannot boast the fertile plains and streams of

Asia, nor the multifarious forms of vegetable and animal productions of Africa. But you possess hills and vallies, mountains and forests, seas, rivers, and islands, whose diversified form and features indicate and promote the plenitude and versatility of your genius. You doubtless deem it a felicity that the progress of religion, of reason, and civilization, has greatly softened the ferocious and savage dispositions of man. In our own times the principle and practice of slavery are abolished, a change which once was thought impracticable.

“Monarchs have been justly accused as the authors and abettors of war: we now are determined to wipe away that reproach, though it does not belong exclusively to us; and we now announce to you an improvement of more vital importance to your present and eternal happiness than all others, which have ever yet been made. Think not that we ascribe it too much to the progress of reason and civilization. The religion we profess, is a religion of perfect benevolence; and we this day restore that religion to its pristine form and primitive beauty. Our great Redeemer is the Prince of Peace, and our God is Love. War is inconsistent with the precepts and spirit of the Gospel.

“In the name of God and of Jesus Christ, we command you, each one, to love his neighbour as himself; to lay aside the dispositions of war: *“Beat your swords into ploughshares, your spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more.”* Let it be regarded as a first principle, that as life is given by God alone, he alone has a right to take it away. Let the manslayer be held in universal abhorrence; and it shall be our care to secure men of that description, in a place of confinement, where they may render some benefit to society, and be allowed a season for repentance. We cannot now detail to you the reasons at length, on which we adopt a change so material in our policy.

“Turn your attention to cultivate the arts of peace, the liberal sciences, and those improvements which aim at the happiness and not the destruction of men. Listen not to the cruel and insidious voice that may tell you that war is necessary to your safety. Look back to the ancient empires, whose foundations were laid, and whose walls were cemented in blood. Did they ever enjoy rest? Look at the warlike and powerful nations, since the fall of Rome,—the Saracens and Turks. Have they not been perpetually at war? Have they not been a scourge and curse to the human family? Where is their honour and their glory? Does not the narrative of their actions blacken the pages of history, and sink man to a

level with those accursed spirits, whose work it is to torment and destroy? Of what avail were all the Tartan wars, led on by the fierce and bloody spirits of Ghenghis and Tamerlane, whose course was marked with the flame of fifty thousand cities, and the blood of millions of human beings?

“Learn to abhor their actions, and shun their examples; for were devils to become incarnate, they could not spread wider mischief or occasion more misery. O hasten to escape the retribution that fell on them, and the eternal cloud of infamy that will ever rest on their names and achievements. Give the rains of heaven time to blanch the fields of Europe, long stained with blood; give the angels of mercy and of peace time to visit your dwellings, and the blessings of the Father of heaven to descend on your children.”

Sir, would not such a manifesto as this, coming from the grand potentates and nations of Europe, make many converts to peace in our country? I presume we should hear many a Christian say, “Well, really, I always had doubts about war: now I see clearly that war is wrong, and wholly unbecoming the Christian character.” Many people are not waiting for evidence, but authority and example.

If there be any thing truly abhorrent from the moral sense of mankind, in an individual murder: any thing which ought to be the subject of earnest and solemn investigation, when one man takes the life of another, it certainly would require no great stretch of improvement, from the present state of Europe, for nations to become as scrupulous on this subject as individuals. Little more seems requisite, than some general shock of public feeling, to change the current of opinion, prejudice, and expectation. If individual assaults, assassinations and murders, would be an inconvenience in civil society, they are no less, but far more so among nations. A private murder extends to the loss of one life only, but a war to the loss of multitudes of lives on both sides; to immense expense, and a general depravation of morals.

I have dwelt on the preceding supposition, not altogether as an impossible, I hope not totally improbable case, merely with a view to promote a train of thought, on a subject of such deep importance. I will not enter into any consideration of what would be the probable state of Europe, provided all its inhabitants should adopt the pacific system. Though, I think, whatever partial inconveniences might be apprehended, yet, all things considered, the state of Europe, under such circumstances, would be far happier than it ever has been.

But our argument is to rest on a much lower supposition; a single nation adopting the pacific principle and practice. And to suppose the strongest case possible, let Great Britain be that nation.

It will be said, "If Great Britain were to disclaim war of all kinds, and on every ground, that she would fall an immediate prey to her neighbours; be plundered, subjugated, and dismembered." There are several reasons which induce me to believe this would not take place, which I will state separately. And,

1. Neither Great Britain nor any other nation will determine to lay aside war, but with a simultaneous resolution to treat all nations in a just and amicable manner. Moral and religious motives, in that case may be presumed to direct her conduct. Complaints would receive a due attention, aggrivances be redressed, and speedy reparations made, for all offences, or aggressions of her subjects. It must be confessed, that ambitious nations do, sometimes, make war on their neighbours, without any pretence of complaint. But more generally there is some infraction of justice plead, which, if suddenly and cheerfully removed, the sanguinary consequences would not follow. Were Great Britain evidently and promptly just to all her neighbours, many causes of war would certainly be removed, and, of course, the probability of her being invaded, diminished.

It might, indeed, be said, if Britain will not defend herself, who will defend her? But should she be derided for her simplicity, the world would be astonished at her justice, and the name of a Christian nation would begin to have some import.

2. Jealousy of rivalry in arms, and the fear of a powerful and warlike nation, very frequently calls forth invasion, and exposes a nation to the intrigues, coalitions, and offensive alliances of neighbouring states, entertaining a spirit of revenge for previous injuries, or determined to repel any future aggression by anticipation. But when a people have apparently abandoned war, by discontinuing military preparation, and ceasing to cultivate a martial spirit, they are no longer objects of jealousy, or fear, or resentment. The ground on which they stand, their attitude, their temper and conduct will do more towards dissolving a hostile coalition, calming old resentments, appeasing jealousies, and quieting the fears of their neighbours, than the most specious and skilful negotiation, or the most active preparations for war.

What then becomes of the maxim, that "to be prepared

for war is the best security of peace?" To which I answer: there has never been a fair experiment on the ground for which I plead. This maxim probably is not true among fighting nations, whose ultimate reliance for security is on war. It has never been tried by a nation known to be pacific in its principles and conduct, which relies for defence on its own innocence, the justice of its neighbours, and the protection of heaven.

A truly pacific nation will certainly never be invaded from jealousy of its power;—never to retaliate injuries, for it will commit no aggressions. As far, therefore, as fear, jealousy, and revenge, are concerned, the peaceful nation will need no warlike preparations; of course the above maxim does not apply to such a nation, in these cases. In the present state of Europe, neither avarice, nor the hope of conquest, are very frequently the direct occasions of war.

3. Were an independent state to assume such ground, and maintain such a character, as to excite neither fear, jealousy, nor a desire of revenge, she would be able to make a powerful appeal to the justice of all mankind, as her safeguard: nay, her appeal could not fail to be effectual in very many instances; and would give her greater security than the wooden walls of Athens, or the steel clad armies of Rome.

———"Abash'd the Devil stood,
"And felt how awful goodness is."

The whole world would say, "These people make no war: they even refuse to shed blood in their own defence; their dealings are just and honourable; they live in peace; they injure nobody; and shall we invade and seek to destroy them? God forbid!"

The conqueror, burning with ambition, and driving from war to war, in pursuit of empire, perhaps might invade such a nation, if nothing but a sense of justice stood in his way. Yet it is certain, no conqueror ever did fall upon such a nation, and whether such an event would occur if such a nation existed, we may be better able to conjecture in the sequel of these remarks.

4. We may perhaps illustrate this subject by noticing how an individual, refusing from principle to fight or take life on any account, fares among warriors and fighting men. Let that man go through the world, among all nations, both civilized and savage, and his person will be considered as sacred. This is a known fact, which no one will controvert. He may meet with ignorant savages, who will mistake him for a spy,

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or an enemy in disguise, and may take his life. But let them once understand that he is perfectly harmless, and they will not hurt him, but treat him with kindness. It must be allowed, that they may sometimes lay hands on his property by stealth, or by violence, and may on that account take his life; but this is not common. A man known to be a son of peace, in China, India, Persia, Turkey, Tartary, and among the rudest savages of Africa and America, as well as through all Europe, is, generally speaking, considered inviolable, both in his person and property.

There is no general remark more true, than that the man who is harmless, passes without harm. He may suffer, at times, as the innocent often suffer, through suspicion, for the guilty; and he may be attacked through avarice, malevolence, or envy at his virtue; but such attacks are unfrequent; and it is a general truth the world over, that he who injures no one, will not be injured. Though we cannot certainly infer thence, how a nation would fare among warring nations, we may approximate to that conclusion, by considering the principles and condition of the Quakers. They disclaim all war, and never resort to violence, yet they are treated, even among nations at war, as general *Friends*, agreeably to the noble appellation they have selected for themselves. They have sometimes been allowed to pass and repass the lines of armies in the field, and suffered to prosecute their own business, simply because they are known not to interfere with war.

5. Should Great Britain declare for peace and non-resistance, it is not probable she would long remain alone, on that ground. The force of example, in great and magnanimous actions, is no less powerful among nations, than individuals. Scarcely was any respectable nation ever known to adopt any great measure relative to science, arts, politics, or religion, without being followed by others. Thus when Athens adopted the republican form of government, the states of Greece soon concurred. When one state or nation received Christianity, others followed. When one nation undertook a crusade, all Europe flocked to the standard of the cross. When one nation rose in the reformation, she did not long stand alone; and I only add, when one nation abolished negro slavery, all Europe followed the example.

The friends of peace are numerous, though little known as such. The real Christian does not love war and bloodshed, and can find it no easy matter to love his enemies, to pray for, and do good to them, and yet kill them. These

points in the character of the warrior and the Christian, are like iron and clay; they will not amalgamate; no art can make them harmonize together. The Christian, in view of war and bloodshed, has many a struggle. What time his soul ascends to God in prayer and devotion, when he falls in humility before the throne of eternal mercy, when he melts in heavenly love, and feels a little foretaste of the serene and eternal joys of the blessed—O! how unlike to such feelings is the rage of battle! How can he lift his hand to send the soul of his worst enemy to everlasting death?

Such being the feelings and character of every true Christian; I say there are more friends of peace in the world than we can imagine. Should one nation, should Britain, in all the pride of her power, and splendour of her wealth, come out and declare for peace, I fancy I can perceive how the sons of peace would emerge to light, and lift up their joyful voices in every corner of Europe. Yea, and they would flock to her white and lovely banner; and strangers would seek her shores from every corner of the globe. And I feel the strongest persuasion, that other nations, more or less, would adopt the same principle.

Who does not feel grateful to the memory of Egypt and Greece for their arts and sciences, to Great Britain for her wise and salutary laws? But the nation which shall first come forward and declare for perpetual, for Christian peace, will deserve more lasting gratitude and honour.

She might indeed encounter some trouble, as perfect tranquillity is not the lot of this mortal life. But I doubt not she would be protected, and would find herself greatly improved and benefitted by the change. Hence I observe,

6. There is such a thing as a divine protection exercised over nations. Were the history of all nations as truly known as that of the Hebrew nation, there no doubt would appear as continual an interference of the divine hand, as there was in the case of the Hebrews. The only difference is, the agency of God in the Hebrew history, was recorded, and we can read it; but in the affairs of other nations, it is generally unperceived, and altogether unrecorded. That God, by whose favour and providence kings reign and princes decree justice, holds nations in his hands; and his language is, "O! that they had hearkened unto my commandments, then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea!"

Every Christian ought to know and feel, that God can protect a nation, and that he ordinarily deals with nations ac-

cording to their visible conduct. The single circumstance, that a nation should renounce war, still remaining profligate and abandoned to other vices, would surely not screen them from the divine displeasure, and from calamity. But here it is proper to remark, that, probably, no nation, as such, will renounce war, but from motives of religion, which will indicate, and in fact, ensure a general spirit of reformation. So great a change, and so magnanimous a resolution, will never be taken by a weak, vicious, and profligate government. But however vicious a nation renouncing war might be, in other respects, this act would, at least, not be in the catalogue of her vices, and as the sovereign Arbiter awards national retribution in this life, he might determine to set the seal of his approbation on the principles of peace; and I am inclined to think would do it, wherever they might be adopted.

But in how many ways God can build and plant, or pluck up and destroy human institutions! And they shall, one day, become as chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and the wind shall carry them away. In the mean time, their origin, their progress, and various fortunes, are all in the hands of God. The boasted efficacy of self-defence, the vast and sanguinary art of war, which has engrossed, at least, one half the efforts of the human race, cannot save a nation one moment, without the panoply of divine protection. Without a miracle, the great JEHOVAH can protect a pacific nation. He that toucheth the hills, and they tremble—the mountains, and they smoke, can scatter nations by the blast of his breath; can humble monarchs by his frown. He can change times, and withdraw man from his purpose.

It surely is reasoning which neither departs from experience, nor the oracles of truth, that if it would be pleasing to God to see his creatures on earth lay aside their hostile dispositions, and live in love and peace, he would make a nation, so professing and so conducting, the object of his care and favour; and if it be a fact, that half the vices which distract and destroy men, proceed from war; we may conclude, that whatever nation shall reform in so grand an article, will not only escape its train of evil consequences, but will amend its morals in other respects.

But, what if a nation professing peace, should be at times injured, or even subjugated? What then? Is this any argument in favour of war? Are warlike nations never invaded nor conquered? Where is Babylon, Persepolis, Athens? Rome, the imperial, “eternal” city, was besieged, taken

by storm, plundered, and subjected to the horrors of war five times in the space of twenty years. How often have the streets of that warlike city flowed with blood, since the day that Romulus laid its foundation in the blood of his brother Remus? How often has that city, that grand school and mistress of war, been conquered since the days of Alaric? And in modern Europe, has war proved a security? Great Britain has been conquered, has drunk the bitter cup of subjugation, four times; has slain millions of her enemies, and lost millions of her subjects in war. France has been conquered five times, and has shed still more blood than Britain, as her inhabitants have been more numerous. In short, there is not a nation worth a conqueror's notice, that has not been conquered. Even China, though containing three hundred millions of people, has not escaped the fury and ambition of the conqueror.

But that nation which God shall favour, no enemy shall invade, no hostile foot shall visit; and no weapon formed against it shall prosper. I proceed to observe,

7. In the last place, Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants fight." This declaration speaks a volume. They did not fight whilst that kingdom continued obedient to its king, and acted upon his maxims. But that kingdom shall be restored, raised to a far greater glory, and spread to a nobler dominion. And the time is near. Some nation must soon come forward and espouse the cause of peace. Some nation must awake to the true dignity and happiness of our race, to the dictates of common sense and reason; awake to the soul's immortal interests and destinies; awake to the wisest and best policy of nations; must soon lift its voice against war, in every form, and against taking away the life of man on any occasion.

The present state of nations and passing events, as well as the predictions of Scripture, give some ground to hope that nations convinced of the evils of war, will sheathe their swords for ever; and that the Church of Christ will return to her truly primitive pacific character. And should Great Britain, or any other nation, be the first in that grand movement, as I said above, I should feel my fortunes more safe in that nation, than in one as warlike and ambitious as ancient Rome. Her principles would induce her to be just and amicable; the rectitude of her conduct, grounded on principles so extraordinary, would form an irresistible appeal to the justice and magnanimity of neighbouring powers. The simple grandeur of the character to which she would rise,

under a change so astonishing and so novel, would excite the attention of all nations, and some would, no doubt, follow her example. She would never be invaded from fear, jealousy, or resentment, and being harmless, would not be likely to suffer injury. On the whole, I feel the highest confidence, that Almighty Providence would extend to her efficient protection, in those cases where she was exposed to the fury of nations and conquerors, whom no sense of justice or humanity could restrain. And they might read in the fate of Pharaoh or Sennacherib, an example of their own temerity, and destruction.

Sir, views of truth, duty and divine Providence, such as the foregoing, have brought me to a firm and unshaken belief, that any nation fully espousing the cause of peace, would prove to be flourishing, happy, and secure, beyond parallel.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” And shall we distrust a promise in which eternal veracity is pledged? Will it not do, Sir, for a nation humbly to repose confidence in the protection of the Almighty? Does not such a pledge as this, import more security to him, who holds it, than the united powers of all creatures could give? I shall waste no time in considering what Britain, as a pacific nation, might do with her fleets and armies. Suffice it to say, that the incalculable treasures before expended on the schemes of war, might with ease be turned to promote the arts and enterprises of peace.

Perhaps one might wish his own country to be the first, honoured, and happy subject of conversion to peace. But in this, as in every thing which concerns his great kingdom, the blessed God will overrule and direct. We ought to wish the glorious prospect to open first, where it will shine with the greatest lustre, and progress with most extended influence. While with agonies of desire, every Christian should direct his eye to the Redeemer's throne, and his prayer to the great Intercessor, that he would hasten the day, let every one say, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” Sir, let us rejoice, in full assurance, that He will in his own times declare who is that blessed and only potentate, **THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

War incompatible with the highest good of all nations.

SIR,

It will doubtless be seen, that, if the preceding grounds I have taken have been maintained, the proposition now to be considered, is already substantiated. Yet, while the topics on which this proposition depends, are not brought fully into view, and as public utility is generally admitted as a good rule to try public measures by, I consider it due, and even essentially important to the cause of truth, to show in what respects war is inconsistent with the best interests of nations, whether considered as bodies politic, or subjects of God's moral government.

At the same time candour and fairness require that we give full weight to the arguments drawn from several important advantages supposed to result from war, both to nations and individuals. My object is to show, that nations, even as the world now is, and depraved as human nature is, would better consult their own interest and happiness by renouncing war. Whereas the popular sentiment is, that, although war is a very great evil, yet the condition of nations is such, that they must of necessity fight, at least in their own defence. And it is this sentiment which keeps the door of war as wide open as any warrior on earth can desire. Indeed, if the line of what may be called lawful war, drawn by the author of the five sermons already alluded to, be correct, no nation that wishes to be at war, can long want a pretext. For, although he admits none but defensive war, yet, to fight for money, for honour, for any right or privilege, at home or abroad, on land or on sea, is, in his sense, defensive war. Of course, David's invasion of Moab, because his servants had the skirts of their garments cut off there, was defensive war. And the Roman war on Corinth, because the Roman Ambassadors had a filthy vessel emptied on their heads in the street, was defensive war, and in it, that splendid capital of Greece, was razed to the ground. And, what is still more wonderful, the author of the five sermons expressly declares, as I have before noticed, that, "as to the equity of the war, little depends upon the magnitude of the injury." "If the evil inflicted be small, there is less excuse upon the part of the aggressor, for persisting in it, at the risk of an appeal to arms." Of course, I presume if our ambassador should chance to have his dog killed, or even kicked in the streets

of London, it would be thought a sufficient cause of war, "*if persisted in.*"

Ah, Sir, the men that breathe the spirit of war, never are at a loss for a *sufficient* cause; and so long as defensive war is admitted, all wars can easily be proved to be defensive, by a system of martial logic.

But the author of the five sermons goes even much further than all this, and swells the boundaries of defensive war so as to take in what may be called "*precautionary wars.*" Sir, I presume there has not been a war in Europe since Europa fled to that continent on the *tergum Tauri*,* but what could, at this rate, easily be proved to be a defensive war.

All war is wrong, and while permitted, was permitted as a scourge and judgment on a bloody race of creatures; and now, that it is persisted in by professing Christians, when forbidden, it is suffered to pour its plagues, mingled with divine wrath and indignation, upon their heads.

No pencil can draw in its true colours the portrait of war. It is all extreme, all horrible, all devilish. It is a sight sufficiently odious and repulsive, to see two men quarrel and fight, even without any real intention of killing; but when a great many thousands on each side, and the late armies in Europe have consisted often of some hundreds of thousands, *meet for the known purpose of killing each other*; to see them by thousands dashed in pieces by cannon balls and grape shot, pierced by musket bullets, cut down by swords—transfixed by bayonets, crushed by carriages, and trampled by horses; to hear their groans and cries, their curses and execrations; to see them rushing on with fury, or retreating with precipitation and despair; presents a scene, which neither tongue, pen, nor pencil, can reach.

The wounded, the dying, and dead, lie mingled and totally disregarded. Thousands, whose limbs and bodies are torn mangled and cut in pieces with disfiguring and ghastly wounds, in torments which none can conceive, lie neglected, writhing and bleeding to death, for hours, and often for days, till they perish in slow and lingering tortures. Think, Sir, of the great battles of Thymbræ, of Issus and Arbelæ; where Cyrus and Alexander slaughtered incredible multitudes of men, and gained themselves immortal renown among wretched infatuated mortals, but I think eternal infamy even among devils. Think of the thousand battles of Julius Cæsar and Hannibal, those thunderbolts of war. Think of the millions slain

* Back of a Bull.

by the Goths, Saracens, and Turks; by Attila, Ghenghis, and Tamerlane; nay, by Charles, Lewis, and Bonaparte.

O my God! what an eternity does the history of our vile race seem to indicate to the greatest portion of men! O thou infinite Father of all worlds and creatures, hear the prayer of a helpless worm: bow thy heavens in mercy and say it is enough; bid the tumult of battle cease; say to her billows, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

1. Sir, the first and most prominent feature of war, is its destruction of human life. But whoever would attempt an estimate of this, must not limit his calculation merely to such as fall in battle; but must extend it to all whose ordinary term of life is cut short by means of war. In this view of the question, I should not hesitate a moment to say, that war has destroyed a third part of the human race. For, it often brings pestilence and famine in its train. Now the first object of society is to render life secure and happy; we see by what means this object has been frustrated.

But the objector will say, the blame of war must be charged to the original aggressor. Sir, the spirit of resistance is a spirit of violence; and in those cases where money, interest, honour, ambition, and intrigue, are at bottom, there is often scarce a shade of difference between the two sides of contention in point of blame. There have been but few wars in which the blame lay chiefly on one side. Let us look for a moment, at some of the most destructive wars that history records. Who can settle the precedency of blame between the Assyrians and the Medes and Persians? between the Persians and Greeks? Even Alexander plead powerfully, and with some appearance of justice, his right to punish the Persians for their invasions of Greece. Who can adjust the question of blame between Rome and Carthage, or between Greece and Rome? Who, between Rome and Rome, in the horrible civil wars of the triumvirates? Who, between Rome and the Gauls and Germans, or Goths and Vandals? Who, between the Guelphs and Ghibbillines, or between France and England, or Francis and Charles?

Wars, instead of promoting security and happiness, impair both; neither can we criminate one side and exculpate the other. The blame of war is, on a large scale, as chargeable to resistance as aggression; and were the principle of resistance and retaliation to cease, war would cease. But they are kept up to preserve life and happiness. How do they do it? By the destruction of a third part of men. But,

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2. Perhaps it will be said, "Though many are slain, and destroyed by war, yet it renders the remnant more comfortable and happy." What has been the comfort and happiness of Europe for the last twenty years? On the contrary, what mourning, lamentation, and misery, have pervaded nearly all that quarter of the globe! The single article of fear attendant on the course and operations of two great armies, absorbs and annihilates more domestic happiness alone, than to countervail all the good which can arise during the same time, from those operations. Draw round each of those armies a circle whose diameter is one hundred miles, and you will encompass a region of perpetual alarms, ravages, pillage, consternation, sleepless nights, joyless anxious days. The people are fled into wretched exile; or perhaps, hardened into despair, they wait in their houses the wreck and ruin of their effects. They are paralyzed by continual, dreadful expectation; skirmishes near them, the thunder of cannon at a distance; parties driving by like a tornado every hour; whatever they have which can be turned to military service put in requisition; they have no rest, no comfort.

The decisive battle at length is fought. Does joy return to the nation whose army is victorious? Why then do we see whole cities in mourning? The flying colours and ringing bells, those external tokens of joy, do but ill express the feelings of thousands of families, when they read the mournful list of fathers, brothers, husbands, and children slain. Alas! the splendour of a triumph is dim, in the eyes of some noble family, whose only son is fallen in battle. They can indeed rejoice that their country was victorious, but O, at what a price, for them, was victory bought! And now, childless their grey hairs must descend with sorrow to the grave. Many a lovely family of children, whose only stay was their father, are, by this bloody day, left orphans, abandoned to poverty—to misery—perhaps to infamy.

Sir, one great battle, however victory may turn, plants stings of sorrow, in many a bosom, never more to be withdrawn;—sorrows which can render those that feel them careless of victory or defeat—yea, careless of life or death. War to remedy evils, real or imaginary, brings, on those that enter the bloody list, sorrows and calamities, intense, intolerable and interminable. "O my soul, come thou not into their secret, unto their assembly; mine honour, be not thou united; for in their wrath they *slew a man*, and in their anger they digged down a wall. Cursed be their wrath for it was fierce, and their anger, for it was cruel." Such are the effects

of war that, often, while the arms of a nation triumph, that nation mourns, and while the eagle of victory perches on the capitol, a vulture of grief preys on every heart; nay, while they gain partial advantages for which they fought, they lose essential advantages which they never can gain.

“For glittering clouds, they leave the solid shore,
And wonted happiness returns no more.”

But, Sir, it is still urged, that though wars take off many people, among whom some are important members of society, and though they cause many privations, and much sorrow and mourning, yet they free the world of many useless people, and in short, prevent the world from being over stocked with inhabitants. A surprising argument! Would it not be better to leave it to the great creator and preserver of men to provide room for his creatures? Shall we go to killing off the supposed surplus of useless people, or rather the surplus which is apprehended, while it is a certain fact, that in a perpetual and universal peace, the earth might support at least *as many hundreds as it does now individuals*? Besides, what prospect is there of a surplus of inhabitants on the globe? Has there been any probable increase for two thousand years? Will any man undertake to say, that there are now more people on the globe, than there were in the Augustan age, or a thousand years before that age? I presume not. I give it as my opinion, Sir, that both Asia and Africa are amazingly depopulated. What armies did the Romans find in Carthage and Numidia? The peace establishment of ancient Egypt was four hundred thousand men. The Israelites went out of Egypt under Moses with six hundred thousand fighting men: and with what an army did Pharaoh pursue them? The Assyrian armies were still larger. Could a Persian monarch now invade Greece with an army of five millions, or half that number? which all ancient historians agree Xerxes brought into Europe. Could Asia Minor now raise such armies as were brought into the field by Priam king of Troy, by Croesus king of Lydia, by Mithridates king of Pontus, who shook the Roman empire in the zenith of its power? And even in the north of Europe, styled by Dr. Robertson “the vast store-house of nations,” it is doubtful whether population has increased.

But should it be admitted, that there has been, on the whole, a gradual increase of people in modern times, how many ages must elapse before the world is full? The vast

regions of America are (still but thinly sprinkled over with people, and no doubt this globe might sustain many thousands of millions of inhabitants. And what is it but the destructive and demoralizing spirit of war, that increases the vicious class of wretched beings, who are such a burden to the earth that wars are necessary to cut them off and send them in haste to endless perdition? The authors of war are accountable for occasioning millions of that miserable class, and for the method of destroying them.

Sir, if the rulers and governments of nations would put a period to war, and turn their attention as earnestly to the arts of peace, and to the happiness of their people, as they have to cultivate the art of killing, that wretched class of people would be soon exterminated, not by falling in battle, but by being restored to usefulness and happiness.

3. While war cuts off from society both good and bad, and while it opens to nations an immense common sewer, or drain, filled with numberless myriads of wretched people, fit for nothing, but to fill the ranks of armies, and fall in battle, it strikes a deeper and more deadly plague through every rank and order of men. It diminishes the estimate of life, and brings nations to that state in which they can see thousands after thousands bleed with as much indifference as they see an ox led to slaughter. It disrobes society of humanity itself, familiarizes human beings to every thing horrid, and converts them, if I may so say, to monsters, as much more terrible than wild beasts of prey, as they have more knowledge and power to hurt.

They stop at no assignable degree of vileness and depravity, at no vice in speculation, at no enormity in practice. The more frequent and near the scene of war, the less difference is seen between the army and the people, in point of morals. Pillaging, theft, and robbery increase; profaneness lifts its audacious and blasphemous voice,—drunkenness, and lewdness, revel and riot in their obscenity, and idleness slumbers in the day, that it may lift its head and perpetrate the deeds of horror and darkness by night.

The moral character of armies, so uniform and universal, is, alone, sufficient to show, that the Almighty frowns on wars. And the astonishing rapidity with which war spreads its vices through a nation, is the seal of heaven's curse impressed on mankind. Can you imagine, Sir, that the infinitely holy and omnipotent God, will ultimately make an army a blessing to a nation, whose horrid oaths and incessant blasphemies, like the hoarse murmurs of the angry sea, continually ascend be-

fore him? Whose course is marked with every atrocity and every abomination? Will such means of defence give health and prosperity to a nation? As soon might you expect the blasts from the infernal pit to waft music, fragrance, and pleasure, on their stygian wings.

*“Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis
Tempus eget.”*

Christians, Sir, are infatuated on this subject. They seem to imagine, that it is no matter how abandoned to all wickedness an army is, provided it be well armed and trained, and led by able officers. Never was there a greater mistake, and Christians who fear God, had they their senses about them, would fear such an army, as the sure conductor of divine wrath to a nation, rather than confide in it, as a channel or instrument of divine blessing. I am surprised this matter has never been regarded more in its true light. Such armies may indeed gain victories, and their operations often result, apparently according to the proportion of physical causes; but still the moral order of events takes its invariable course; and such munitions, and such protection, combines with other causes, whereby all wars accelerate the prostration and ruin of nations.

4. The enormous expense of military operations, while at the same moment business is interrupted, and a habit of idleness and dissipation prevail, hastens the poverty and bankruptcy of a nation. Restless and ambitious men, and especially youth, from love of noise and tumult, and the hope of promotion, drop all other pursuits, and fly to the standard; and the artful voice of flattery inflames their desire to receive the appellation of patriots and friends, and defenders of their country. Ambitious governments here find the means of increasing their power, and they never fail to employ them to their full extent. They sacrifice the lives of thousands, and the repose of millions, to their lawless ambition: they contemplate, without regret, the spread of idleness and vice, of dissipation, poverty, and indigence; they see the resources of a nation melt away in the expenditures of war, her youth swept off in battle, her territories laid waste by fire and sword, and her national existence put at hazard. How blind is such ambition! Yet we see it continually displayed. And I remark in the last place,

5. Whatever may be the origin of nations, they generally end in war.

This is a just retribution of Providence, no less than the natural effect of the course they pursue. Having perpetrated cruelties and shed blood to an enormous amount, they generally sink in a horrible scene of carnage, and miserably perish in their own blood. There is a strong resemblance in many respects between nations, considered as public bodies, and an individual. They have their infancy, youth, and manhood.

But in an important respect they differ from one man ; that, whereas a man is mortal and has his period, a nation has naturally a lower kind of immortality, or perpetual existence. They seem to terminate by no natural necessity, but generally, if not always, by their own vices. Of this all history bears the most ample testimony. And the closing period of empires and nations, is replete with wretchedness which can be known only to the individual sufferers, which terminates in death, and is covered from mortal eyes under the impenetrable shadows of oblivion.

It is the characteristic of man to be amused with great names and sounding words. We dwell much on kingdoms, and empires, and nations ; whereas they consist of single creatures of moral characters and immortal destinies ; of individuals who will be known only in a future state, or as subjects of the Divine government. Men who fail of rectitude of heart and character, who esteem their own moral conduct of no importance, while they make high professions of patriotism, and give great attention to public concerns, quite mistake their object. Societies and empires are certainly important, because they can produce by united efforts, what individuals cannot. But societies small or great which consist of corrupt and depraved individuals, are regarded with anger and indignation by him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and at whose rebuke the pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished. The man that would build up a nation, must be a good man in the sight of God. If in his heart and conduct he is wicked, let his professions of patriotism be what they may, let his public career be what it will, he is contributing his weight to the ruin of his country. But as nations, as bodies politic, (though the individuals who compose them are accountable and will be judged for all their actions,) are not known in a future state, they receive the retribution awarded to them in this world, and they appear to be dealt with according to their outward conduct. If, therefore, they are externally just and pacific, they shall receive according to the measure they mete.

As war, therefore, destroys human life ; as it fills nations

with mourning and misery ; as it infects them with destructive vices, and exposes them to the divine wrath ; as it plunges multitudes into poverty, and renders nations poor and bankrupt, and thereby paves the way for oppression and slavery ; it tends directly to the destruction of nations, and accordingly nations have been exterminated and abolished by no other means.

War is, therefore, incompatible with the best interests of nations. And as we have already shown, that even one nation alone, would be better, far better, without war than with it, how powerful is the conclusion, that were all nations to abandon war, the world would be far happier than it ever was.

Some person perhaps will say, "How happy it would be for the world if no more unjust wars were waged ! Ah ! happy indeed : but, Sir, would it not be still happier for the world if the spirit of resistance and retaliation were banished from nations ? Resistance and retaliation are certainly branches of the tree, from which springs unprovoked aggression and violence ; and they grow hard by each other. Nor is the difference between them so immense as many imagine. The first offensive war ever waged was by Cain on his brother Abel. and I ask the strenuous advocates for the defensive system, whether they imagine that Abel's character would have descended with equal glory to posterity, if he had adopted their principles, had laid about him, in his own defence, and perchance had slain the first aggressor ? Abel surely needed neither permission nor instruction, since nature itself, say the advocates for self-defence, teaches all creatures to defend themselves. You remember, Sir, "Non docti, sed nati ; non instituti, sed imbuti sumus." Yes ; had Abel resisted, and prevailed against the murderous Cain, and killed him, would the word of God have recorded his name with such honour ? Would he have worn the bright and glorious crown of the first martyr to eternity in heaven ?

Sir, I think there is odds in this controversy ; and I fancy the defenders of *defence*, in view of this simple fact, feel their strength withered and their confidence fail. But the conduct of Abel was the pattern of the primitive Christians, who acted fully up to his illustrious example. Pattern, did I say ? No : they had before their eyes, an infinitely more glorious pattern in the person of the Son of God, who in all his conduct set before them the true import of his precepts.

Many persons will reply to all this, and say, "I would be willing that war should cease, and I pray God it may cease,

but nations will fight, and how shall we prevent it?" I answer, Christians can set them an example of peace, and if they will not follow it, they at least cannot plead the example of Christians in vindication of violence and bloodshed.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XVI.

War inconsistent with the Christian Character.

SIR,

SINCE the commencement of these Letters, (in 1815,) which have been interrupted by ill health, and by other avocations, successive numbers of "*The friend of Peace*" have appeared, together with other judicious and able productions, on the same subject; in which, the point now before us, has been treated in a far more copious and satisfactory manner, than would consist with the brevity I intended in these observations. My remarks, therefore, will be very limited. Yet a topic so radical to the system, cannot be passed over in silence.

It is remarked by the celebrated Soame Jenyns in his "Internal Evidences of the Christian religion," that the single precept of love to enemies, so frequent and vitally important, in the gospel scheme, was sufficient to give mankind new views of religion. So that Christianity, not only because in it life and immortality were brought to light, but because it commanded universal love, might be called, in a sense, a new religion. On this, more than any other account, it had to conflict with all the habits and prejudices of the human mind.

Before I attempt to give a sketch of the Christian character, I think it necessary to premise, that the various grand traits of that character are required to be constant and uniform; not to be assumed for an hour, and neglected for a month; not to be practised at home and dropped in an army; not to be mere show and tinsel, but to be radical and deep; springing from the heart, and forming the grounds and rudiments of character. Hence it was, that a conversion to Christianity was a change so deep and so important, affecting so essentially the heart, life, and conversation, that it was called a second birth;—a new creation. But let us look at

the Christian character, and see how it can be made to comport with war. I shall consider it by parts; selecting some of the most important. And,

1. Christ commands his followers to be meek. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for *I am meek* and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

Now, there is scarcely a trait in the character of Christ, more frequently mentioned, or manifested, than his meekness. What is meekness? Every body knows the meaning of the word. It is mildness, softness, gentleness of manners. It stands opposed to harshness, asperity, cruelty, and haughtiness. This does not look much like

———"The soldier,
 "Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
 "Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 "Seeking the bubble reputation,
 "Even in the cannon's mouth."

How does the soldier's character, here drawn by the pen of a great master, resemble the Saviour's character? "As a lamb led to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers, so he opened not his mouth." And will it be denied, that the primitive Christians were like their great leader? How would two armies of meek and gentle Christians act, were they drawn up in order of battle? Would they act like Christ and like Abel, or like Cain and Judas? Would they render evil for evil, blow for blow, and death for death? Ah! Sir, I fancy the war would be bloodless: I fancy both would come off conquerors. Were they led by the Spirit of God, the thunder of artillery, the clash of armour, the groans of the dying, would not be heard. Angels from the regions of peace and love might hover over two such armies with delight.

2. Patience is the kindred virtue of meekness, and they are seldom far asunder. How does this comport with the character and feelings of a soldier? It is very easy to say that a soldier may be a patient man. I grant a soldier may have fortitude; but as for patience, it is little known in war or in armies. If I mistake not it is a very popular law in most armies, that a duel must follow an insult, and that a man who declines a challenge, given under certain prescriptive forms, is liable to be disgraced. These may indeed be among the *leges non scriptæ*, but they are laws founded in custom, so that "the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." There seldom, if ever, was a war, which Christian meekness and patience, uniting their mild influence, might

not have prevented; and which, if we take into the estimate both parties, would not certainly have prevented.

Impatience of injury and insult is generally the source of protracted contentions and quarrels. "*I cannot bear all this,*" is the common language. The influence of this demon through all ranks and orders of people, and through every human dwelling on earth, is extensive and dreadful. O! what a sweetener of the life of man would a small degree of Christian patience prove! What vexations and toils, what tempests of passion and fevers of anxiety do men endure through impatience!

The ground of the Christian's patience, in one word, is his hope and prospects. The awful eye which is upon him, an impression of the grandeur of his own immortal powers and faculties, the thought of entering an eternal state, and the hope of enjoying everlasting felicity, enables him to bear the evils of life, makes him esteem all temporal afflictions light, and fortifies him against the sudden shocks of passion; so that he can bear to be insulted, abused, and injured, without rising up to seek revenge. But I must not enlarge. This is contrary to the spirit of war, and all the maxims of armies.

3. What shall we say, Sir, to Forgiveness, as relating to war and bloodshed! In this respect the Christian and the soldier are antipodes; nothing can be more opposite than war and Christianity, forgiveness and revenge. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us:" and again, saith the Saviour, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." But here the advocate of war presently finds a door of escape, by saying, there must be repentance in order to forgiveness. Did the Saviour regard this distinction when in his dying agonies he cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Did the divine plan of mercy proceed on this principle, and do nothing for the sinner till he repented? How then could the Redeemer himself declare, "I was found of them that sought me not?"

I appeal, Sir, to the man of honour, the man of exalted sentiments and generous feelings, and I ask him to say whether forgiveness does not spring from a nobler source than revenge; whether it does not indicate a greater soul and a purer heart? Are not the worst dispositions capable of revenge? the best only habitually forgive. However sweet revenge may be in the moment of rage and fury, or to the soul poisoned by habitual hatred and malice, after those dire passions are passed away with the causes that gave them

birth, who can look back on the gratifications of a revengeful spirit, with pleasure? Suppose of two men on a death-bed, the one had never failed to take revenge for insults and injuries given him; while the other had as habitually triumphed over his resentment, and had cordially forgiven the injuries he had suffered. Which of these men would look back on the various passages of his life with most pleasure? The revengeful man might say to himself, At such a time and place, I chastised an insult—I retaliated an injury; there I killed a man in a duel, I put a man to great expense who had slandered me. But, alas! these reflections of a dying man are like the dark images of troubled and feverish dreams. It is but the recollection of wretchedness endured and misery inflicted.

At the moment a soul is to appear before God, conscious of its infinite need of forgiveness, how soothing to run back on a life spent in the exercise of that heavenly temper! That soul will often say, "What offences, what injuries could I not forgive? I, whose transgressions nothing but infinite mercy can pardon, whose guilt the sand of the sea shore could not outweigh." The miseries and calamities we have, by our revengeful passions, inflicted on the children of our common Father, can never be the subject of pleasing recollection in eternity; can never be classed among our great and honourable actions.

4. Let us, Sir, in the next place inquire how humility would agree to the character of soldiers and of war. Humility is one of the most distinguishing of all the Christian virtues; it shines with the brightest lustre in our Saviour's character, who descended from the throne of heaven to unite himself to our fallen and ruined nature. But his humility did not stop at a union so condescending, he sustained the humblest rank in life, and in the end, humbled himself still more deeply to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore his followers are commanded to be humble. And surely the duty comports with their condition.

There is not a creature in God's kingdom in which pride is less becoming than in man. Born to die, his nature is frail and crushed before the moth. Perpetually liable to disease and death, and condemned by the holy law of God, he has no hope but in sovereign mercy. Eternal truth regards him as a criminal bound over, not to trial, but to execution; for he is condemned already. Yet mercy is set before him, a propitiation is made for his sins, and he is invited to return to God, and fore-warned of the consequences of refusal. He

expects soon to leave this world, and go before the eternal Judge to receive his unalterable sentence.

How becoming would humility be in a creature of such a character, whether his guilt or his danger, his condition or his prospects, were considered. Accordingly no disposition of mind is inculcated more frequently or on stronger reasons than humility. And, Sir, the Christian possesses it. Wherefore nothing is more unsuitable to him than the habits of an army, and the very object and intention of war. Shall a Christian take up the trade of killing men? He had better fall down humbly before God, and beg for his own life. Shall a Christian shed his brother's blood? Far better had he apply to the blood of the atonement to obtain his own pardon. Shall a Christian attempt to seize the rod of vengeance and send the wicked to endless perdition? God forbid it: rather let him devote his time, and the remainder of his probationary state to deprecate the wrath of Him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Sir, nothing is more remote from the end and design, and all the measures and operations of war, than humility. Neither war nor warriors, as such, have any thing to do with humility. They are as remote from it, I might almost say, as heaven is from hell. The spirit of war is a spirit of pride, loftiness, and self-sufficiency. Of course it diffuses that spirit over nations. It seizes the versatile powers and vivid fancy of youth, and where the mind is corroborated by age, the vanity and pride of youth is settled into haughtiness, contempt, and all their kindred train.

5. Sir, I come to another eminent trait in the Christian character, with which I scarcely know what the soldier can do; or what he can say about it. I mean self-denial. And this has much to do with meekness, patience, forgiveness, and humility, and goes into the very nature of them all. They are contrary to man's depraved nature, and at every step in them, he must "deny himself." What saith our blessed Lord? "He that denieth not himself, taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." If man is a selfish creature, and sets too high a value on his own interest and pleasures, then the whole of religion which labours to raise him above his narrow selfishness, and reform his passions and inclinations, is a self-denying religion. And this is the fact.

The precepts by which the military man is formed, know nothing of this. They teach him to aim at little else but victory and vengeance. The submission which they inculcate to superiors may sometimes require a degree of self-denial in

the exterior, but they have nothing to do with the heart. The nature and progress of war does not repress, but gratifies every corrupt and sensual passion. Need I notice the scenes which occur when a city is taken by storm, and the vanquished garrison and helpless inhabitants are devoted to the fury of a brutal soldiery? Neither age nor innocence afford any security from the horrible and diabolical passions of the victorious army. All that is usually said of it is, "It is the fortune of war." But I need not enlarge. The laws of war impose no self-denial, and the spirit of war neither feels nor inspires any.

6. Heavenly mindedness, an idea *which it is the misfortune of our language to have no term to express*, is also frequently mentioned as belonging to the Christian. "Let your conversation be in heaven." Heavenly mindedness, is that state of the mind occasioned by its being much occupied and delighted with heavenly objects. How little of this is found among Christians, even in the most retired and tranquil circumstances. Man, though with an earthly body, was at first endowed with a mind capable of soaring in delightful contemplation of the divine glories, and of conversing with beings of superior natures in a holy and immortal union. But sin has rendered him earthly, sensual, and devilish. Restored by grace, his conversation is once more in heaven, and he has a heavenly mind; and thus he is prepared in due time for the glorious inheritance of the saints in light.

War renders the bands of human depravity stronger, if possible, than any other device ever set on foot by men or devils; it sinks our nature lower. And whereas man in a fallen state is divested of all true holiness, yet not of all the amiable traits and humane sensibilities which the God of nature bestowed to beautify and adorn his creatures; by this device of Satan, thorough work is made with absolutely every thing lovely and estimable in human beings. Multitudes of men of the lowest order are huddled together in an army; without the more delicate example, the finer feelings, and softening influence of the female sex; without the endearing ties of wedlock, or parental and filial affection; under the stern and summary despotism of military law; with violence, plundering, devastation, and killing men, for their professed and only object; to which state their minds are wrought up by the military manœuvres and evolutions of every day; and what is to be expected but such effects as are visible? And what a place is this for heavenly mindedness? Without the despair and torments of hell, they come as near to the vileness of de-

vils as earthly beings can. On the tongue there is no restraint; the licentious passions know no limits. They rush to every excess without apprehensions of sin or shame, and probably without fear or remorse.

I am fully aware, Sir, that there are shades of difference in the moral character of armies, but nothing is more certain than that "bad is the best." The maxim, that the army is a school of politeness, will do well to subserve the policy of nations, who wish to keep armies on foot; and I will have the candour to say, that the maxim in a sense is true. But it applies to the *few*, and not to the *many*. In the higher ranks of an army, there is an open frankness, a generosity, a magnanimity and ease, in the deportment of a military man; and if the discerning eye cannot perceive blended with it a lurking menace, a daring boldness, and Gallio-like air, it is very pleasing and fascinating.

But an army is not the school of Christ, and though a place in which men are peculiarly exposed to death, there is no place in which a preparation for death is less thought of; none more incongenial to the heavenly mind.

7. "But I say unto you, love your enemies." What pains have been taken to prove this precept consistent with war, and killing our enemies! But I presume, Sir, no force of logic, no skill of casuistry, no compass of sophistry, no labour of criticism, is equal to the task.

The connexion of this passage gives a force and perspicuity to its import, which I am astonished should ever have been assailed, or attempted to be impaired. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Now, can I love my enemy, do good to him, and bless him, and at the same time kill him? Absurd! Love has for its object the good of the person, or being, loved. What love can I feel for a man, when I stretch forth my hand and stab him to the heart? Do I love his character? No; that is not required; for Christ does not love the sinners whom he died to save. Do I love his life? No; for I destroy it. Do I love his soul? No; for I have every reason to believe, if I kill a wicked man, I shall send his soul to hell.

All this is commonly evaded by alleging, that, though I may love my enemy and wish to do him good, yet, a greater good requires that I kill him. Ah! Sir, will that be the judgment of eternal Justice in the great day? Nothing can be more false or fallacious than such reasoning. In killing an impenitent sinner, an evil is done to him, which far out-weighs

all the temporal good ever to be enjoyed, not only by one man, but by all men on earth. The highest temporal prosperity of all the kingdoms on earth, would be a trivial sacrifice to save one immortal being from eternal misery. But this point has been sufficiently illustrated in a former letter. I can have no love to that being I kill. I deliberately surrender him up, and give him over to an amount of misery which I would not encounter for as many millions of years of pleasure and prosperity, as there are stars in heaven or sands on the sea shore. To talk of such love to enemies, is an abuse of language, an insult to reason, and mocks the authority of Jesus Christ.

If we are commanded to do good to those that spitefully use and persecute us, what becomes of robbing, wasting, ruining, nay killing them, and hurling them in a moment from the worst evil we can do them on earth, to the consummation of all misery, in hopeless, endless punishment? O ye warriors, ye heroes who hope to build your fame on the prowess of your arms, could the veil which hides the secrets of eternity be suddenly lifted—could you see to what end you consign the victims of your ambition and revenge, even selfish and hardened in blood as you are, the sword would drop from your nerveless arm; and you would say, “This surely is too vast a price to be paid for my pleasure and grandeur!” I have that opinion of your generosity, of your magnanimity, your humane sentiments, that I believe, could you see the miserable wretches you have consigned over to the horrors of eternal darkness, you would be ready to exclaim, “O my cursed ambition! would that I had been some peaceful shepherd, some humble peasant, rather than to have been the instrument of such misery to my fellow-creatures.”

Suffer me, Sir, to mention but one attempt more to evade the force of these reasonings. It will be replied, “As to the future misery of the wicked, we have nothing to do with that. Whatever it is, it is inflicted justly.” Why then is it said, “Thou shalt not kill?” Why did the divine law guard the life of man with such solemn sanctions? Why does the gospel require a still higher regard to man’s life, enjoining it upon us to love, and do good to those that spitefully use and persecute us? It is no doubt because in the gospel the veil is rent and the mysteries of eternity are disclosed to the eye of faith; because in the gospel the true destinies of the soul are made known, and all the actions of our lives are to be regulated, not by our temporal, but eternal interests.

What can the advocates for war, and killing men, understand

by love to enemies? They surely will not make it the love of complacency, which takes delight in the object towards which it is exercised. The love of God, which induced him to send his Son to die for sinners, was not the love of complacency. Can it be any other love than that described by an apostle, which worketh *no ill to its neighbour*? “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, *love your enemies.*” The distinction “of old time” between a neighbour and an enemy is repealed, and that love which worketh no ill to its neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law, and whose fruits, as explained in the words following, are, *to do good, to bless, and to pray for*, is to be exercised to both. No more can be said: no evidence more full; no proof more unequivocal.

“Of his fullness have we received and grace for grace.” If the graces and virtues of the Christian character correspond with those of Christ, if they all stand in direct opposition to the principles and practices of war, can there be a doubt whether Christ himself is opposed to war, or whether he is properly called the Prince of Peace.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XVII.

War contrary to the Laws of Christ.

SIR,

THE grand law of the Redeemer's kingdom is love; nor does this materially differ from the law by which God governs the intelligent universe. Love is declared to be the fulfilling of the law: and consequently, if sin be defined a transgression of the law, then all sin must consist in a departure from the rule of love. The most elaborate and minute investigation would show this to be the true character of sin; nor would it show with less clearness, that a perfect conformity to the great law of love would exhibit all that is excellent and morally beautiful in a rational creature, whether a redeemed sinner or a holy angel.

Under this glorious, immutable, universal and eternal law, arise several precepts adapted to the condition and capacity

of the several orders of creatures which occupy the various departments of God's kingdom. Since sin has found its way among intelligent creatures, there are two moral principles perfectly opposite to each other; two dispositions which divide rational creatures. These are designated by the terms *love* and *hatred*, or friendship and enmity. These dispositions are as different in their nature as light and darkness, or beauty and deformity; nor are they more alike in their effects; one tending directly to happiness, the other to misery. This difference and these opposite tendencies, are obvious prior to the consideration of duty or obligation, or the promulgation of any divine law. The difference between love and hatred is well understood; and that one tends to happiness, the other to misery, cannot be questioned.

We have before us, Sir, what I understand to be the true distinction between sin and holiness; or, in the more popular style, virtue and vice. Man is a mystery to himself. Why, or how it is, that such different dispositions should take the ascendant in rational immortal creatures, lies beyond our research. But how little we know of our outward and corporeal being; and how much less of the nature and powers of the soul, that mysterious intellectual being, which, as yet, lies hidden from its own inspection. Whether sin is a disease, transferred through the immortal part by corporeal affinity; whether derived from unknown influences, or propagated by generation; whether the result of constitution or moral agency, does not so much concern us to know, as how to escape its fatal pollutions, and eternal consequences.

All intellectual creatures are social, and formed for the most happy and exalted union with the great Fountain of Being, and his glorious family. These are the grand objects of love, and are infinitely worthy of the regard which the divine law claims for them. The sinner has withdrawn all regard for these, and placed it supremely on himself. He therefore hates every thing, every creature, every being, every law or principle, which stands opposed to his own interest and gratification; and would destroy them, were it in his power, as things which prevent his happiness. He has revolted from the great society of beings, and is actually at war with the whole. But a sinner like himself, is no more the object of his love, than a holy creature, because their interests are not the same; the supreme objects of their pursuits are opposed to each other. There may be a seeming union, but liable every moment to interruption; and it must soon suffer a final rupture. The sinner, when his disposition becomes fully

manifested, will discover that he hates every being in the universe, and is at open war with the whole ; and hell will be a place of everlasting discord. He therefore is a rebel against the law and government of God.

There is a promise, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God. This indicates a reciprocal union of interest and affection, between God and his holy creatures. It clearly shows that he who loves God supremely, and his neighbour as himself, does all he can to promote the glory of the one, and the good of the other ; and in return, all creatures and events are caused to work together to promote his good.

To love a being, is but another name for a disposition to promote his happiness : while, on the contrary, to hate, is but another name for a disposition to destroy him. The vilest sinner is thus a proper object of the Christian's love, because he is yet in a state of probation. God has not yet manifested his determination to cast him off ; but is using an innumerable variety of means to bring him to repentance. He is waiting to be gracious, and inviting the rebel to return.

But, Sir, why should I hate my enemy and seek his destruction any more because he is *my* enemy, than because he is the enemy of any other man ?—of my neighbour ? If the law of Christ requires me to love my neighbour as myself, I ought to feel as acutely for my neighbour as for myself. All the resentment and desire of revenge which a man may feel for an injury done to himself, more than he would feel for another, is partial, and contrary to the laws of Christ ; and the same is true in regard to nations. But, I ask, does a man or a nation ever commit an injury for which they wish some other man or nation to fall upon them and destroy them ? I presume not. Then by what rule do they wish to fall on others and destroy them, for their offences ? Not surely by the law of Christ which lays down this maxim : “ Wherefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye the same to them.”

Sir, from the grand law of love, by which Jesus Christ governs his Church, the following principles or rules of conduct may be deduced ; on which I shall make no comment.

1. It is unlawful to hate an enemy ; for hatred is the disposition which tends to his destruction. “ I say unto you, love your enemies, do good,” &c.

2. The desire of revenge and retaliation is partial, and therefore unlawful. “ All things *whatsoever* ye would that men

should do unto you, do ye the same to them." No man wishes to be destroyed. And again, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Because he is of as much importance.

3. Revenge and resistance are unlawful, because they invade the prerogative of God. "Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Man cannot avenge himself through defect of knowledge, power, and justice; he does not need to do it, because it is the work of God. "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." I will defend and deliver you.

4. Every object is to be estimated according to intrinsic value and excellence. Therefore God is the supreme object of love, because the infinite fountain of being and excellence, and all holy creatures, according to the rank they hold in, and the relations they bear to, his kingdom.

5. All dispositions and passions are unlawful, and to be subdued, which we would not indulge in the presence of God, and which, in their operation on the mind, do not tend to its preparation for heaven.

6. In a word, the Christian is required to live and act for eternity; regarding this life as a preparatory state, soon to issue in the eternal and spiritual world.

Such, Sir, are my views of the laws of Christ. But every wise legislator, in promulgating a system of law, together therewith bestows privileges and immunities on the subject. If my very limited knowledge, Sir, as a civilian, should appear in the arrangement of this important subject, I hope my frankness in expressing my opinions, may be accepted, in place of qualities more profound and more splendid.

Christ said to Pontius Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and if we consider the character of his subjects, as stated in the last letter, or his laws, as just stated in this, we shall be ready to assent to the truth of his declaration. The jealousy or fear of Pilate would not be alarmed at such a king or kingdom, though rising in the midst of the Roman Empire. But the proud and ambitious spirit of men is extremely diffident of such laws, forbidding revenge and all resistance; and the corrupt heart will often prompt them to say, "such harmless laws, such a tame and passive kind of government will not do for me."

Let us then, Sir, consider the privileges guaranteed to the subjects of Christ's kingdom, under the administration of these laws. And,

1. They are assured generally of his friendship and favour, of his presence and his love. "Lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world. My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled." These engagements on the part of Christ have been amply made good; and the countenance and favour of the Almighty Redeemer has proved an unfailing source of consolation to his people. What can it be less than such, since it is ever present in the hour of trial, and shows its efficacy most where it is most necessary? The perseverance and fortitude of Christians in the ages of persecution, were considered as miraculous. It was to the favour of the Prince of Peace they owed this amazing support. They seemed to resemble the three Children walking in the midst of the fire unhurt, while one walked in the midst of them whose glorious form declared him the Son of God.

By the favour and love of Christ, the real sons of peace enjoy an inward support which is far different from the hero's valour, or the soldier's courage. It is not that fever and delirium of mind which the martial trumpet, the clash of armour, and the shouts of battle, inspire. It is invisible to the eye and unknown to the world, but it is an anchor to the soul, and far more than countervails that boasted strength of nerves, that brutal courage, which enables men to plunge in death, with no rational hope of salvation. I speak not against the proper exercise of true courage and fortitude, considered as natural endowments; but, Sir, that courage, resembling the ferocious boldness of the tyger, which induces men to set death at defiance, when they have no reason to hope in God's favour; that courage, which causes many to rush wantonly on death, when they have the strongest reason to expect a miserable eternity, deserves the name of madness; it is insanity of the most deplorable and frightful character. To all eternity it will be bewailed as the highest and last act of desperate folly. But the Christian enjoys peace of mind, contentment with his lot, confidence in God, and hope in futurity, which no outward circumstances can overcome or destroy.

2. The Christian is an adopted subject of the Prince of Peace, and member of an everlasting kingdom. This implies two grand objects, *provision*, and *protection*. Under other relations, between Christ and his Church, noticed in the scriptures, besides that of Prince and subject, other duties and privileges might be considered. But the relation of Ruler and ruled, or Prince and people, is sufficient to my present

purpose. Christ has engaged to make provision for all the subjects of the kingdom of Zion.

It is a great practical question, Sir, whether the laws of Christ do not require as much peculiarity in the conduct of Christians in relation to property as to war. This point has only been regarded, hitherto, in the light of general considerations; nor shall I have leisure here to give it that attention which its importance deserves. It is allowed that Christians should be just, punctual, and liberal, in their dealings. But these are terms capable of being used with latitude, and are commonly understood as complied with when no flagrant violation is committed.

“Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed: for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; and your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.” These and similar directions given by Christ, and dictated by his Spirit, are not without import. I am ready to grant, that Christians are not to expect to be fed by miracles, as were Elijah and others. At the same time they should bear it in mind, that God has taught them in his word, that he will supply their temporal wants: and he knows what they need. Resistance, retaliation, and war, have generally, some relation to property; and the grand objection to the pacific system, commonly arises from pecuniary considerations. Christians are apt to say, “If I make no resistance, they will take all that I have.”

Under a firm persuasion that Christ will provide for his people, may I be permitted, Sir, to state briefly, in a few particulars, wherein it appears to me, that Christians come far short of their duty, in relation to property; as this may expose their error in defending it by violence.

1. They fail in a lively apprehension of a universal, almighty, and omniscient providence, which is engaged to make provision for God's people. They do not seem to consider, that the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; that in all human concerns, his providence directs and overrules. Or, if they allow this, yet their feelings revolt, and their hearts grow faithless: nor can they feel such a degree of confidence as to lessen their anxieties about what they shall eat, and drink, and wear, or their ambition to appear in style. While they openly violate one duty, viz. trust in God, they cloak covetousness under another, that of industry and diligence in business. Hence,

2. They pursue the acquisition of property with too much

ardour, not to say often, by unlawful means. It is painful to hear what character many high professors of religion bear on this score. "Such a man," says one, "may be very honest, for aught I know, but he is very hard in his dealings; he is tight in a bargain, he will stand for a penny, and he cuts very close; he will get a bargain of you, if he can. Besides, he seems to have no feelings for the poor, he makes them work cheap, and at the same time give a high price for what he sells them; and if they owe him, he is strict, driving, and relentless." Thus by dealing hardly by the poor, and successfully with the rich; pressing business with intense anxiety of calculation, and activity in execution, he rises to great wealth; and though he never apparently cheats or steals, yet he certainly appears to go on as though he were finally settled here, and expected neither death nor eternity, and as though his property and the accumulation of more, was as important as his existence.

3. Those who are thus successful in acquiring wealth, and in the manner just noticed, commonly employ it in a way as little agreeable to the laws of Christ. They pay their just debts, indeed, and sometimes perform a liberal act. But what do we see? Settled in a palace, "clothed in purple and scarlet, and faring sumptuously every day," every thing around them declares their opulence and grandeur. And while they would fight in defence of their wealth, they give themselves little or no concern about their poor Christian brethren; for, Sir, these are professing Christians I am describing. I once heard some person say of a man of this description, "If this man could give a thousand dollars to some public purpose, and knew his donation would be published in the Gazettes through America, he would perhaps do it; but if some worthy but poor man should privately ask him the loan of five or ten dollars, promising to pay him as soon as he could, he would be frowned out of his sight, with a 'No, I cannot spare it.'"

Sir, the intense ardour with which many professing Christians pursue wealth, the luxurious purposes for which they employ one part of it, and the adamant grieve with which they hold the other, and the desperate means they will take to defend even what is superfluous, are contrary to the laws of Christ; and I fear that they are Christians only in name. The love of money is truly described as the root of all evil; and while it appears daily in the most flagrant crimes, it also appears in a thousand ways that must be odious in the sight of God, but which human laws cannot reach, nor human tribunals punish. The spirit with which property is acquired, hoarded

up, guarded and defended, and the dismay which the loss of it occasions, shows how much it is loved, and what room there is for censure on this subject.

4. The vast inequality in the pecuniary circumstances of Christians, even members of the same Church, and the painful and humiliating facts arising from this difference, are enough to prove the Church to be corrupt and unhealthful. Far be it from me to advocate an equal division or distribution of property among Christians. I am willing that those who inherit or acquire wealth should enjoy the advantage God has given them; and I set that advantage over against the great responsibility and severe trial to which they are exposed by this trust. For who has holiness, self-denial, and zeal enough to enable him to be a faithful steward of the gifts of Providence?

“Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your bodies and spirits which are His.” If the Christian is not his own, what shall we say of his wealth? It is God’s treasure put into his hands. “The silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord.” Nothing is given to the Christian to gratify his lusts; nothing to cherish his pride; nothing to feed his wanton luxury. The great Lord of heaven and earth has given him talents, and has said, “Occupy till I come.” Out of his abundance he has a right to make himself comfortable; I desire not to restrict him unreasonably; but high and solemn obligations lie upon him. It certainly is not to be expected that he should make all his poor brethren rich. But, Sir, there is an easier line of duty drawn, to which he may come. He may take a deep interest in the welfare of the poor, instead of affecting to despise and neglect them for their seeming want of faculty to acquire and retain property, he may devote a part of his time, rather than to elegant amusements and what is called refined society, in visiting their dwellings, inquiring into their circumstances, advising and aiding in the education of their children, comforting them when sick, devising means for their relief and consolation. Did such views of this world’s goods prevail, were property employed in undertakings of this sort, it would cease to be the occasion of perpetual jealousies, contentions, quarrels, and wars. The express directions of Christ himself are little regarded, in relation to the poor. “When thou makest a feast,” saith our Lord, “invite not thy rich neighbours,” but the poor, &c. I do not take it upon me to say, that a feast may never be made for the rich; but how seldom do we see the rich man make a feast for the poor!

Again, "Let him that hath two coats give to him that hath none." I feel satisfied, Sir, that you understand the import of the figurative style of Scripture, and will not suppose that I urge a meaning in these passages which is forced and unnatural. The most I would contend for is, that such passages commonly mean *what they say*. Again, what direction did our blessed Lord give to the young man who came running and kneeling to him, and asked him what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life? "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven." The Saviour, it seems, does not lay that stress on a man's having a great estate, that we do. But that young man loved an earthly, more than a heavenly, treasure. Again, why did the rich Zaccheus, the day that salvation came to his house, say, "The half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any one, I restore four fold." Why did the great Apostle of the Gentiles, speaking of all worldly riches, and honours, and pleasures, say, "I count them all as loss, and dung, and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord?" Do the wealthy Christians, Sir, with whom you are acquainted, appear to consider their worldly possessions as dross? And, finally, I ask, what could be our Saviour's meaning by the surprising declaration, that, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven?" He doubtless intended to intimate the great and dangerous temptation attending riches; as also, that the means by which wealth is generally acquired, and the manner in which it is employed, are inconsistent with the character and hopes of a Christian.

The ambition to gain wealth seems to have no limit. A man wishes first to gain an independency for himself; then for his children, and for their's. Then he launches into schemes of pomp and splendour, spreads out his possessions, builds, beautifies, and adorns; and perfectly overlooks and spurns the object for which wealth is given. There is probably wealth enough in every nation, were there equal honesty, public spirit, magnanimity and love to man, to make every individual of society easy and comfortable.

If the system of war were wholly laid aside, what would hinder nations from making the care of society the grand object of legislative provision? In this beneficent work, human government would resemble the divine, which has, in the stores of nature, made ample provision for the wants of a world of creatures; but which provision, through the ne-

gligence of some, the want of capacity in others, the avarice of many, and perhaps the selfishness of all, has become most unequally distributed. If the contributions levied on nations for the support of war, or but half the sum, were skilfully disposed of for the aid of the indigent and poor, we would have no poor.

I hope, Sir, you will excuse this digression. Among other means of providing for his people, Christ has bestowed a great abundance on some, has made them his treasurers for the benefit of the poor and needy. If the rich refuse to discharge this honourable office, which involves in it high and distinguishing privileges, they must answer for their conduct, when they give an account of their stewardship at his bar. And many, it is to be feared, will there hear the dreadful declaration, "I was hungered and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was a stranger and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." "Go to—" "weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you."

O earth! thou fleeting scene of danger and temptation, rather let me be deprived of all thine enjoyments; rather let me be a beggar, an exile, an outcast, than by thy false charms and delusive pleasures, to lose an eternal heaven!

Christ will not only make provision for his people, but he will protect them. For this his word is pledged; it is the established order and rule of his kingdom. Those who, from a misunderstanding of their duty, or distrust in their all-powerful King, take in hand their own protection, will gain nothing thereby but disappointment and shame. Whether they seek to repel such violence as may be offered them by the sword or by the coercion of the civil law, it will indicate a distrust in his protection who has said "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; when thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee, and through the fire it shall not kindle upon thee: no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue which shall rise up in judgment against thee, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

It is enough for the Christian that God has told him, that all things are working together for his good. What more can he need? The most distant parts of the universe are in the hands of God, the most distant worlds in creation are under the Redeemer's control and direction. The most remote and dissimilar events, creatures, from the highest to the

lowest, are under his omnipotent government. They are parts of the mighty wheel which one spirit moves, and which moves but to glorify his name and exalt his kingdom.

Did Christ pay no regard to the protection of his people, there would seem to be a necessity of their warding off violence, by whatever means they could, and perhaps sometimes of repelling force by force; but as it is, the case is quite different. He has provided the means of their defence, and assured them, in what way, and from what source it must come. It must come, and it infallibly will come from his own Almighty arm. I have, Sir, if I mistake not, observed in some former Letter, that probably the defence of all holy creatures is the established province of God himself, and that they have no idea of using violence either as necessary or as admissible. It seems when Michael the arch-angel and Satan disputed about the body of Moses, that Michael durst not bring a railing accusation even against the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee." If he durst not use violent language, is it probable he would dare to resort to violent actions?

However that may be, the command of Christ to his followers is, that "ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also. If any man shall sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, give him thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." In fine, the Christian is commanded to overcome evil with good. But how is this to be done? The same inspired authority shall answer. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink." O! how unlike the spirit of resistance and revenge! How unlike the dictates of the human heart! How unlike the conduct of mankind?

Suffer me, Sir, in the conclusion of this Letter, to repeat what I have before said. The change of times, of manners and customs, and of the established religion of nations, seems to lay Christians now under incomparably stronger obligations than ever before, to be pacific, and renounce war and resistance. Surely, if the primitive Christians did not fight, when they had no other way to save their lives, why should Christians resist and shed blood now, when their religion is established by law, and persecution has ceased through Christendom?

It will be quite unnecessary for me to go into a particular consideration of the nature of that protection which Christ gives his people as individuals or as a body; as I presume

it is well understood. It comprehends the care of their spiritual interests, and the bestowment of such temporal blessings as he sees will best promote their eternal welfare. But this does not imply any certain measure of outward prosperity. He did once indeed require them to sacrifice all worldly comforts, and even to lay down their lives for his cause. But now, when his religion is established, when the Christian name is honourable, and every man is at liberty to worship in what form he pleases, or even not to worship at all, if he sees proper; when every sect of Christians is favoured with equal protection, Christians, instead of laying down their lives as martyrs, prefer to sacrifice them as soldiers, or to hazard them in war. Alas! Sir, they can no longer say, "Our warfare is not carnal, but mighty to the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan;" but on the contrary, their warfare is carnal and impotent, such as is most gratifying to the powers and principalities of darkness, but will injure the cause for which it is carried on.

The motto of every Christian should be, "We walk by faith, not by sight: we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Sir, I have endeavoured to show that the taking away the life of our fellow-creatures is not necessary under the supposed authority of a divine command or permission; that the best interests of nations, would be promoted by the total discontinuance of war; and, in fact, that admitting defensive war to be right, the regulation of it according to acknowledged principles, would amount to a virtual prevention of it. I have also, I hope, shown, that the usual mode of declaring war can have no influence in diminishing the guilt of bloodshed, that shall ensue: that there must be a real cause, and that cause duly understood by all who destroy their fellow-creatures, in order to vindicate their conduct, on their own principles. Were taking life restricted to such limits, it would be in the next remove to its total exclusion. I have, in fine, endeavoured to show, that war is inconsistent with the Christian character, and contrary to the laws of Christ. I can only commend my remarks to your favourable consideration, and the blessing of God.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

SIR,

HAVING accomplished the purpose I at first contemplated, I trust the extraordinary nature of the subject I have considered, and the incalculable interests it involves, will justify my design, and render any apology needless, for such defects as may appear in its execution. The current of opinion, as wide as the world itself, and the force of habit, corroborated by all the years the world has existed, in favour of the profuse destruction of life, by the hand of man, would leave little for me to hope from my arguments, or from arguments drawn by abler pens, did I not believe that God rules the world, and that the time is near when this disgraceful practice shall come to an end.

Since the commencement of these Letters, I have had the satisfaction to learn, that you, Sir, have publicly espoused the pacific system; declared your disapprobation of war, and have joined a society instituted for the purpose of promoting peace. While you resigned the chair of state, which you had filled with dignity and honour, you have assumed a character which would have adorned that chair, and which, I trust, will before long adorn many thrones, when "Kings shall become nursing fathers, and Queens nursing mothers of the Church."

The sudden and unexpected repose given to Christendom, after the bloody wars and wasting revolutions of twenty years, and the extraordinary efforts of Missionary and Bible Societies, have given an unusual shock to the minds of men, and brought about a favourable moment for the friends of peace to lift their voices and unite their exertions. I trust their activity and co-operation, will show to the world that their opinions go beyond mere theory, and are not wasted in empty speculation. The expectation of the whole Christian Church, through nearly all its sections, grounded on sacred prediction, that a period of peace and prosperity is near, cannot but awaken in every pious mind, an attention to the course of providence; and those whose attention is awake cannot but rejoice to see new light breaking forth.

I have seen, Sir, the weakness and danger of local applications of prophecy, prompted by over-heated zeal, too

often exposed, to venture upon the bare supposition that a period of outward prosperity to the Church is immediately to be expected. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. I am not quite certain, that the usual conjectures concerning the scenes introductory to the Millenium will prove true. Several expositors, on this tract, have already been sufficiently checked and humbled in their career of conjectures, by the sudden and total failure of a new empire in Europe, which was to break and overturn the old establishments, and introduce a new order of things.

But, Sir, it is evident there never was a time since nations were formed, which promised more success to the endeavours of the friends of peace, than the present; and the simultaneous appearance of so many united in their opinion against war, already evinces a hopeful progress of that opinion. I have elsewhere intimated that there are probably few pious persons who have not, at one time or another, had doubts of the consistency of war with christian principles; this indeed seems an inevitable consequence of an attentive perusal of the New-Testament. But I can go much further than this, and say, that I have seen a very great number of persons, in the course of my life, who, though they made no pretences to religion, did not hesitate to declare that they thought war contrary to the gospel; and that they were surprised that a Christian could fight and kill men, since Christ himself expressly forbids it.

Wars are generally occasioned by a few designing and ambitious men, by whom nations are blinded and led; but the happy situation of our own country, remote from all other nations, seems in a manner to exempt us from all necessity, and from all the incitements to war. Were this subject once fairly brought before the public, and set in its true light, the friends and advocates of peace would become respectable by their numbers, and influential by their exertions. Their numbers would be augmented by many whose candid and unambitious temper would allow them to give the subject due consideration.

I have been much gratified to hear that several societies are already formed for the promotion of the principles of peace. The effects of union and concentration are well known, and were never more necessary than in this grand concern. I trust that measures will not be delayed to let the remote and solitary friends of peace, in various parts of the country, know that the subject is under consideration, and that they do not stand alone. It may prove that many persons are on

the side of peace, whose silence has in some measure resulted from that diffidence we naturally and perhaps justly feel of avowing a singular opinion.

Methinks, Sir, that revenge and ambition might be well nigh glutted with blood with slaughter. For nearly six thousand years they have rendered the globe a Golgotha, and the sword has shared with disease the empire of destruction. The present period of peace is ushered in under peculiar circumstances; nations are more ripe and ready for conviction, as certainly they have never seen ambition more insatiable or more vain, more bloody or more abortive, than that which recently agitated the world. The elements of society have undergone some change; and many fundamental errors which served as fetters for the mind are broken up and done away. We have, Sir, in our day, seen slavery abolished, or at least so far, as that correct opinions concerning both the doctrine and practice on which it rested now prevail. Religious freedom has in a good measure succeeded to that deplorable and shameful despotism, which, in all ages, held the human mind in the chains of Satan. Christian nations are awakened in some measure to feel the importance of spreading among the heathen the true knowledge of God. Missionaries are dispersed through the interior regions of heathenish darkness, not for sectarian but for Christian purposes; and noble efforts are making to furnish every nation with the oracles of God in their own language.

While the spirit of war seems for a moment paralyzed, or at a loss where next to point its bloody standard and destructive columns, would it not be a good time, Sir, for the Christian Church to hasten to her primitive ground, to that ground she so shamefully deserted, and which desertion was among the steps of her apostacy? Never will nations cease to destroy each other, whilst kept in countenance by the example and authority of the Christian Church; which, alas! is fatally mistaken for the authority of Christ. Nations seem waiting for, and expecting this movement; and its effects would be great. It is not impossible, Sir, but there may be even monarchs who would rejoice to hear of the spread of pacific principles. Why should they not, since war does but increase their anxiety, their insecurity, and their guilt?

O my country, latest in the annals of time, but first in the discovery, and foremost in the career of civil and religious liberty; possessing a world replenished with the comforts and blessings of life! mayest thou also be foremost in this glorious reformation; mayest thou be first to acknowledge the domin-

ion, obey the laws, and enjoy the approbation of the Prince of Peace !

Let me close, Sir, by observing, there are powerful reasons why the friends of peace should seize the present calm, while for a moment the great ocean remains unruffled, besides those which arise from their general duty and obligations, and those which arise from favourable changes and general facilities. Their union and activity might, at least, tend to the prolongation of peace, if not to its final establishment ; and they should bear it in mind, that in the agitations and turbulence of war, they cannot hope to retire to the neutral and impartial ground of *peace* without being followed by suspicions, and reproached with coldness and disaffection to the honour and interest of their country.

I am, Sir, with great respect and esteem,

Your most obedient Servant,

PHILADELPHUS.


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1. The first group of people who are not in the labor force are those who are not in the labor force because they are not in the labor force.



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